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GAY COMMUNITY NEWS

outwrite6

writers on writers

Debating the Fight for Same-Sex Marriage Page 4

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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GAY COMMUNITY NEWS

THE GAY & LESBIAN PRISONER PROJECT NEEDS YOU!!!

The Gay & Lesbian Prisoner Project of the Bromfield Street Education Foundation is looking for volunteers to assist in our work to educate the gay & lesbian community about prisoner issues and to provide information and support to gay men and lesbians who are incarcerated. The Prisoner Project helps gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender prisoners find supportive pen pals, provides educational material to prisoners along with free GCN subscriptions and publishes articles about gay & lesbian prisoner issues. Volunteers are needed to respond to letters, research and compile educational materials, fundraise, to work on public education projects, and more. Call (617) 262-6969 for more information.

The Prisoner Project is currently seeking writings about the concerns of gay & lesbian prisoners. If you are incarcerated or if you are knowledgeable about prisoner issues, consider writing a short article so that we may share your expertise with others. Please send submissions to: Prisoner Project, Bromfield Street Education Foundation, 29 Stanhope Street, Boston, MA 02116.

Prisoner Pen Pal listings have resumed. See pages 38-39.

GCN-Off-The-Page A Fiction Reading Series

7:00 at
The Living Center
29 Stanhope St. (Behind the Hard Rock Cafe)
Boston, MA

Wednesday, March 20

Stephanie Grant
author of *Passion of Alice*

R. S. Jones
author of *Walking on Air*

Wednesday, April 17

Bernard Cooper
author of *Truth Serum*

Shyam Salvadurai
author of *Funny Boy*

Wednesday, May 22

Christopher Bram
author of *Father of Frankenstein*

Marcie Hirschman
author of *Safe in America*

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Debating the Fight for Same-Sex Marriage



Introduction

Same-sex marriage has hit the mainstream—big time. From feature stories in local and regional newspapers to *USA Today*, from talk shows like Oprah and Cristina, a Latino show, to international magazines like the prestigious mag *The Economist*—the issue is out and about. Who's opposed and who's for does not line up left, right and center.

The Christian Right of course opposes; the libertarian Right, like Andrew Sullivan, views marriage as an antidote to "promiscuity" or as *The Economist* wrote on the "advent of banal homosexuality:" "If homosexuality is at root an orientation, then it may just as easily be grey tweed as purple chiffon, bourgeois as revolutionary. It can be countercultural, but it does not have to be." Presumably marriage could add to the banality of homosexuality. For some, marriage can further domesticate 'the homosexual,'—that is, create "emotional and economic stability" as well as a cadre of grey bourgeois against the outrageous, the revolutionaries, the countercultural queers.

On the progressive side there again is no consensus. Letitia Gomez, former director of Latino Lesbians and Gay Organization (LLEGO) views gay marriage as entry into the Latino idea of '*familia*;' while Lisa Duggan expresses a desire for recognition of her partner as next of kin, but questions whether state-sanctioned marriage answers her needs for benefits and rights, given the complex relationships that constitute her kinship network.

Interestingly, the mainstream presentation of same-sex marriage covers only the challenge from gays and lesbians to straight society. The question they raise is whether there are sound reasons to exclude gays from the right to marry? But there is a great divide among queers that the media does not report. Among gay skeptics, a different question is asked: What effect will marriage have on the relationships among queers in the community?

At stake is how marriage as an institution, as it is built into the law and policy decisions, shapes relationships between large numbers of people not just the two who take their vows. Witness the assault on women, both career women and poor women, for failing to create or sustain a proper family of 'mom, dad, and the kids.' How are we, in the fight for the right to marry, shaking up the mandate that marriage is *the* choice, not just one among many. As conservatives plot their attacks on divorce and illegitimacy, as they assert 'failed family structures' as the cause of students' diminishing educational achievement and poverty, an ideological war is generated that rationalizes cuts in social programs and poses 'morality' as the antidote to such conditions. This is the terrain on which the fight for same-sex marriage is being played out.

The question of same-sex marriage is with us, like it or not—and it provokes, as it should, more than a yes/no answer. Battlegrounds are being drawn in at least a dozen states where conservative legislators and rightwing organizations, fearing that Hawaii will legalize queer marriage, are initiating legislation and referenda to disallow same-sex marriages in their states. In June of 1993, The Hawaii Supreme Court ordered the state to issue marriage licenses unless the state can find some "compelling state interest" in continuing to discriminate against same-sex couples. The State Supreme Court then ordered the Honolulu Circuit to hear the compelling state interest arguments. The National Right to Marry Coalition, made up of more than two hundred gay groups, awaits the outcome of this case with great optimism. If Hawaii then recognizes same-sex marriages later this year, a national campaign to win that right, state by state and at the federal level, will ensue. Enormous energy and resources will go into these campaigns, and the backlash will escalate. This is a good moment to articulate clearly both what has propelled peoples' positions on both sides of this issue and what we stand to gain and lose in the "freedom to marry" campaign. GCN invited 8 people to respond to this question; we are publishing the six submissions we received. —the editor

The Marriage Juggernaut

by Lisa Duggan

The marriage juggernaut now emerging from within queer communities and organizations scares me. It makes me uncomfortable and unhappy. Even the idea of "commitment" ceremonies makes me nervous; they remind me of lunacy inquisitions.

Before proceeding with a critique of the pro-marriage arguments, though, I'd like to first acknowledge that I understand why this issue is an important one for so many queer folks. In this culture marriage operates on at least two levels. On the symbolic level, marriage is a central form of social recognition that integrates relationships into larger social networks. On the material level, marriage is the conduit for a wide array of benefits and subsidies, from tax and estate matters to health insurance and housing provisions. There are a wide range of significant benefits at the border between these two levels as well—benefits like recognition as next of kin, hospital visitation and bereavement leave. Our exclusion from those benefits is a devastating kind of discrimination which can have horrible consequences as the Sharon Kowalski case so graphically dramatized. So I understand the energy that goes into trying to claim those benefits. But I think we need to stop and think twice about how marriage and family really operate now, about the histories of such institutions, and about what it is we really mean to be asking for.

The Marriage Misfit

There is nothing natural or eternal about marriage and the family as we now envision them. Kinship systems vary enormously from matrilineal systems in which paternity is not recognized and the co-parent is the mother's brother to various forms of polygamy and polyandry. There are myriad ways of organizing kinship, dependency and responsibility for children. We must recognize that the post-World War II notions of marriage and family are historical and changeable and that we might want to alter them profoundly rather than ask in under the current regime.

In the contemporary US, what does the legal structure of marriage and the family assume or construct in the world. In the first instance, it assumes that a sexual relationship is the primary basis for the formation of a family or household. It assumes that it is in such a household that reproduction occurs, that responsibility for children is centered. It assumes that sexual/emotional ties are properly joined to economic interdependencies, and that this sort of household is the route for property transmission. However, this structure is so unstable that what the law mostly does now is dissolve and reconstitute such families; this is not a family formation with a lot of durability. The question for us is, does this set of assumptions—that a sexual relationship is the basis for a household, that reproduction takes place through such relationships, that economic dependence and property transmission is best structured through such households—really define the way we actually live? Can such arrangements meet our needs—our symbolic needs for social recognition or our material needs for state administered benefits? I don't think so. Squeezing our actual relationships into the institution of marriage would be like trying to fit my size ten foot into a size five shoe.

Let me use my own relationship as an illustration. I've been with Nan Hunter for eleven years, and during that time our relationship has been the primary sexual and emotional relationship for both of us. We consider ourselves to be each other's next of kin. But we don't live together, we don't have a joint household, we only have a limited economic partnership. Our sexual relationship does not follow the marriage model; it's an understatement to say it's a lot more complicated than that. Both symbolically and materially, marriage doesn't work for us. We're not a monogamous couple; we're not a joint household; we're not a reproductive unit. Even the concept of domestic partnership as it is currently defined doesn't work for us. I live in New York City and work at New York University. Domestic partnership arrangements are available through the city and the university, and I want some of the benefits such arrangements bestow. I want next of kin recognition, hospital visitation, bereavement leave. I want Nan to be able to use the university's gym and libraries. But in order to register for such benefits, I need to prove that we live together. In other words, I would have to lie.

Disentangling Needs

Why can't we figure out how to disentangle symbolic and material needs and benefits, and contest the way they are currently joined in marriage law and in family law? Why can't we find ways to recognize

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Marriage Latino Style

by Letitia Gómez

Matrimonio, casamiento, unión – Spanish words to describe marriage. In Latin America, it is common for a couple to marry twice. One gets married *por la iglesia*, by the church, and also *por la civil*, by the government. Getting married *por la civil* obviously is important because it legitimizes the union in the eyes of the law, but this usually takes place in the constabulary or courthouse. In Mexico, I have witnessed lines of couples with their witnesses waiting out in the rain for their chance to get married. In a way, that is part of the ritual. However, for most couples the more important marriage ceremony is the one by the church. This ceremony is also the most fun because friends and family are there to witness and celebrate with the couple.

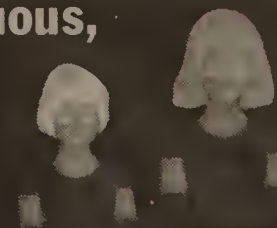
Many of us who have had commitment ceremonies have, in essence, had the fun ceremony, and the one, *por la iglesia*. Once same sex marriage is legally a right for gays and lesbians, we can make the choice of getting married *por la civil*. Many of my gay and lesbian Latino friends who are in committed relationships are looking forward to getting married *por la civil*. Some of them are looking forward to enjoying the practical benefits of a legally recognized marriage. Others look forward to the day when their legally sanctioned relationship legitimizes their life—their partner, children: *their familia*—to their families of origin, society and the government. However, I'm sure this need to have our relationships recognized by government will not stop there. Then it will be on to the church, to truly get married *por la iglesia*, as a choice.

Same sex marriage, however, is not a burning topic right now for many gay and lesbian Latinos. Political realities like Proposition 187 [California's anti-immigrant referendum that was found unconstitutional by the

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In some cases, the pro-marriage position is being taken up to produce an image of the respectable, responsible domestic homosexual as opposed to the deviant, promiscuous, irresponsible queer.

Lisa Duggan



Detroit Papers on Strike: Where Do Gay/Lesbian Journalists Stand?

by Philip Kennicott

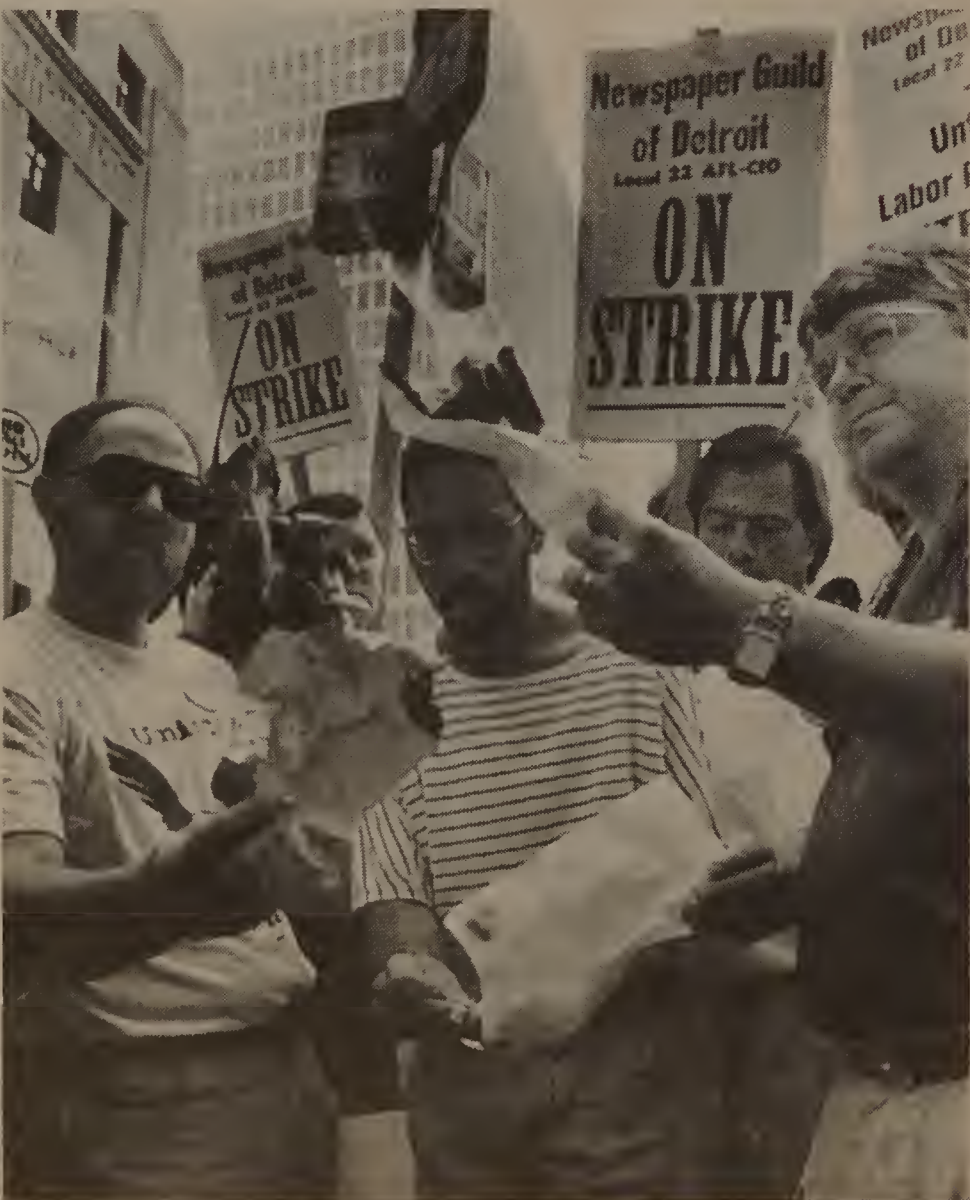
Editor's Introduction

Gays and lesbians are active in the labor movement, fighting for recognition, benefits and equality. Many have formed local organizing groups such as the Gay and Lesbian Labor Activist Network in Boston. Yet the issues of workers' rights, of corporate greed and consolidation go unremarked in most of the gay press. In fact, too often we encounter appeals from gay organizations to send thank yous to corporations that establish domestic partnership policies, with complete disregard for the general working conditions at those businesses.

When AT&T announces its plan to lay-off 40,000 workers over the next few years, at a time when their corporate profits are record high, does the fact that they have been 'gay friendly' mean we acquiesce to their greed? Or when workers at the Detroit Free Press and the Detroit News go out on strike and call for a boycott of those papers, do we still buy the Detroit News because Deb Price, noted lesbian columnist, continues to publish in it? On the internet, subscribers to various gay lists put articles on line from the Detroit papers. A Michigan resident wrote back that they are boycotting the papers because of the strike and asked that people not send thank-you letters to the papers for their coverage of gay issues; and asked others to respect the boycott. Yet, the articles kept coming, along with the requests for thank-yous.

The Labor movement has won benefits for queers through union contracts and has been crucial to gay and lesbian victories against rightwing initiatives. It has been a coalition partner in many campaigns. The election of John Sweeny to head the AFL-CIO marks an historic transition for the largest labor organization in the country. Sweeny, long known for his support of gays and lesbians and his commitment to democracy and labor activism, promises to dramatically expand labor's organizing capacity. This can only be a boon for queer movements.

The following remarks are taken from a talk given by Philip Kennicott at the Creating Change conference, sponsored by the National Lesbian and Gay Task Force in Detroit, November, 1995.



Detroit Free Press reporters burn an ultimatum from their company, threatening them with termination unless they return to work.



At Sterling Heights, near the plant gates, protesting union members clash with the police.

A battle is raging in this city, a war against the values that many of us in this room share. Right now there over 2000 people in Detroit on strike against the city's two daily newspapers—the Detroit News and the Detroit Free Press. These people have put at risk their families, their careers, their reputations, their houses, their cars, their children's welfare and education; they have undertaken a struggle of abstract principle that is, nonetheless, fought on a very real battle line, fought against riot cops and thugs. For the companies we are fighting, this is a tactical matter of profits and losses; for those of us on strike, it is an ideological war that is won or lost by how long we can hold out against the daily economic and emotional attrition. I know the issues of this strike may be new to many of you—indeed I know many of you are surprised that this strike is still going on—but I want to explain why this labor battle is very much our own battle.

The History

In 1989, Gannet, which owns the Detroit News, and Knight-Ridder, which owns the Free Press, came to the union workers who produce their newspapers, and to the people of Detroit who buy and read their newspapers, and said, "We're not making money and we need to change the way we're doing business."

These two independent newspaper chains—giants who compete all across the country—wanted to form a joint operating agreement (JOA), thus merging their business operations, eliminating competition, and cutting redundant staff. Another word for a JOA is monopoly. In exchange for the economic windfall of the JOA, the two newspapers took a 100-year pledge to publish an independent editorial product in Detroit.

The unions resisted the JOA because it meant massive lay-offs; the people of Detroit resisted because it meant higher advertising rates—retailers would no longer get competitive prices for advertising and as we all know, retailers always pass their costs down. Yet the unions and the people of Detroit ultimately agreed to the JOA under threat that the Free Press would be closed; they felt it was worth preserving these two papers which have been city institutions for a century. Three years later, in 1992, Gannet and Knight-Ridder again came to the unions and said, "We're still not making money, we need further cuts." Once again the unions were reluctant but agreed to make concessions. They gave up jobs and they accepted workplace rule changes, they allowed union jobs to be redefined as non-union jobs—without benefits, without job security, without retirement plans or health care. Again the unions agreed to accept cuts to make the papers profitable.

In 1995, when our contracts came due, the newspapers again came to the unions and again they asked for more cuts. But this time the situation was different. In 1994, the Detroit Newspapers returned to Gannet and Knight-Ridder \$55 million in profits. This time when the companies asked for more cuts, the unions said: We'll bargain, we'll listen, we'll compromise, but we will not give new and massive cuts when the papers are profitable. We built these papers and we gave to make you profitable; now that you're

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If that wasn't bad enough! The Budget as a Killing Field

by Ruth Finkelstein

The "Republican Revolution" that swept Congress this year has perhaps reached its limit. It has successfully made the deficit, thus budget cuts, the overarching concern of government, yet has failed to win the national debate in the push to radically cut social spending and eliminate health, education and welfare as a public right. Their goal is primarily ideological. At issue is whether government includes the provision of services to those who cannot buy them or, as the Republican agenda insists, we should shift these services to the private sector, leaving a growing percentage of the population to survive in an increasingly inaccessible marketplace.

Comprehensive health care for the majority of the population is fast becoming a luxury. Health care raises a 'for profit' banner as insurance companies and HMOs take over the industry. Health care providers are restructuring themselves to serve the healthy, while capping expenses for people with serious illness like AIDS. The debate in Congress is whether government will underwrite health care for seniors, people with chronic illnesses, the poor and the disabled. This crisis has not only overwhelmed the constituencies who rely on government supported care, but when you add the diminished economic status of most people in the US and the outright greed on the part of big business, you get an angry, often resentful population.

How Did We Get Here?

The average hourly wage today is the same as in 1964, representing a 20 percent decline in real wages; the number of those employed who now pay for their own insurance premiums has doubled; and there has been a 30 percent drop in the number of jobs with pensions. Thirty-four million workers have parttime jobs and the biggest employer in the country is the temp agency, Manpower. At the same time, corporate profits have increased dramatically—two and one half times the current rate of inflation while compensation to CEOs has gone up four times the rate of inflation. In 1964 a CEO of a major company earned 15 times that of a worker in their company; in 1994 that ratio was 130 times that of their average worker. Companies making the largest profits are also laying off workers as they merge into ever larger conglomerates. Even the mainstream press starkly states that at a time when AT&T has announced record profits they also plan to lay-off 40,000 workers. The pattern today is benefits and wages are going down and profits and mergers are going up. What are the links between the Republican agenda, the economic situation and health care?

What's Become of Healthcare?

First, health care is an industry. It is 1/7 of the economy. The same trend of increasing profits and mergers is taking place in health care, especially the managed care companies. They are for profit, earning increasing amounts of money. As health care professionals will tell you, their wages and benefits are decreasing and in their work they confront new

incentives—e.g. one receives a benefit if the number of patients one sees in an hour increases. At the same time, an anti-government privatization myth is propagated by the Republicans and sectors of the health industry. That is the notion that by shifting the financing of health care from the public sector to the private sector we will have a higher quality, cheaper product—the old market forces ideology. But, if we look at the administrative costs of Medicare vs. the administrative costs of private insurance, Medicare runs about 2 percent and insurance ranges from 20-40 percent depending on whether you include advertising costs.

Another link between the economic situation and the health system is a direct consequence of the first. In this country having insurance is tied to employment. Not surprisingly, we have seen a dramatic increase in the number of people who are uninsured paralleling the increase in the number of people in the service sector, which means low wage and part-time jobs. The number of uninsured people in the US is up to 41 million. In New York state the number has grown from 1.9 million nine years ago to 2.5 million today. People are losing the benefit of employer paid health care and when some employers do pay for it, the trend is toward paying only a percentage of the cost. It may only cover the worker and not family members for example. Companies are shifting to more minimal coverage, which in effect means meeting the needs of only those who are healthy.

Ideological Hype

The Republican response to this stagnation in wages, to the slowing of the economy is a two part myth. First, their claim is that our money is primarily funding the deficit. The way to bring economic health is to balance the budget. The second way is for rich people to get richer, leading to investment and growth. They have been so persuasive in selling the issue of the deficit because they play on peoples own precarious economic situations. Families are more and more in debt. If wages have been stagnant or dropping while the cost of living is going up, then more and more people are living in debt. More people in the household have to work, more people are aware that a single illness threatens their ability to survive economically, and more and more people are preoccupied with how to pay the bills. Thus the Republicans have made an easy transfer from the economic health of the family to that of the country.

The national AIDS organizations have a responsibility to help their members find, participate in, or create those kinds of coalitions at the local level



Ending debt has a resonance. In the family, when one thinks about how to lessen debt, no one thinks that one should quit their job. But that is what the Republicans are doing—cutting taxes means cutting revenue leading to even greater cuts in spending which means significant cuts in employment.

The government spends money on the interest of the debt, on defense, on foreign investments and aid, on entitlement programs and discretionary spending which includes health care, public health, family planning, education, anti-poverty programs, highways, etc. Defense and foreign spending won't be cut by much. Discretionary public spending and entitlements are where the cuts come from.

Politically, Congress is hesitant to cut entitlements such as social security, veterans benefits, and farm price support. What entitlements are politically OK to hit: welfare, Medicare and Medicaid. But not in equal parts. Medicare has a mobilized, politically important constituency that politicians feel more responsive to. I believe current proposals to alter Medicare undermine the fundamental structure and health of the program and in time will prove quite damaging. But, the largest cuts will come from Medicaid and welfare.

What effects will Medicaid cuts have on AIDS care? More than half of the medical coverage for people with AIDS is provided by Medicaid. In contrast, Ryan White, the Care Act, an issue the gay community has spent an inordinate amount time on, covers less than 5 percent of the health care for people with AIDS (though it does provide important social services). PWAs get their hospital stays, their doctor bills, home care, medicines, etc. paid for by Medicaid. Ninety percent of the children with AIDS use Medicaid. Many people with AIDS were eligible for Medicaid before they got AIDS, for example women on AFDC, but many people are only eligible because they have AIDS. Many who are not poor enough to qualify early in their illness, become poor enough later in their illness. Medicaid either pays their health insurance premiums or covers their direct care.

What is an Entitlement?

Medicaid is an AIDS program. Medicaid is being restructured in the most profound way since it was originally created in 1965. The process is hidden—buried in the middle of the budget reconciliation bill. This restructuring involves rewriting spending levels for each year.

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Imagination, Politics and the Marketplace:

Talking with author Dale Peck

"We have fallen into the notion that you have to write about who you are or what you know."

Dale Peck



© Richard Sooley 1995

by Michael Bronski

Dale Peck

While second novels, particularly when they follow unqualified hits, are a tough enough sell, a novel about a heterosexual marriage from an openly gay writer has enormous critical and commercial hurdles to surmount. Will gay readers want a novel about a straight marriage? Will the heterosexual reading public care about a book by someone who has been lauded as the most talented gay writer of his generation?

Dale Peck feels as though he is at a crossroads in his career. In 1993, at the age of twenty-five, his first novel *Martin and John* – a novel, discordantly composed of juxtaposed narratives, detailed the lives of two men, one a hustler with AIDS – was published to instant critical acclaim. Now at the age of twenty-eight his second novel *The Law of Enclosures*, which has already been given a rave in *Publisher's Weekly*, is about to be published. Experimental in form – a meditation of the painful marriage of a working class couple, Beatrice and Henry (the parents of John in the earlier novel) is made up of two separate novellas separated by an autobiographical narrative of Peck's own growing up in a violent and difficult family – *The Law of Enclosures* presents a challenge to Peck's traditional audience.

Audience

Bronski: *Martin and John*, because of its intensely positive critical reception is generally seen as a gay "cross over" novel that was read by a straight audience as well as a gay one. Do you think this will happen with *The Law of Enclosures* as well? Only in this case it may have a double-cross over: will the gay audience want to read a novel about heterosexual marriage?

Peck: I think the idea of the so-called gay novel "crossing over" is a myth. *Martin and John* received enormously positive reviews in the mainstream press yet as far as I can tell my readership was 90 percent white gay men, and 10 percent heterosexuals. I saw this reflected in both the hundreds of letters I received in response to the book as well as the readings I did in both gay and straight bookstores. For the most part heterosexuals don't buy or read books that are deemed "gay."

Bronski: Well, books, of course, aren't "gay" or "straight"—that is merely a marketing decision. Does the problem begin there?

Peck: Yes. That very label creates an otherness about the book that makes them uncomfortable. This problem isn't created by gay writers, but it is our problem. Often "gay books" don't get reviewed outside of the gay press, and so they don't sell as well. This means that the authors make less money and cannot support themselves—ourselves—as writers.

Bronski: So when you are writing now, knowing that what you might finally publish will be labeled a "gay book" how does that affect your process. What effect does it have on your imagination? Or on your style?

Peck: You can't worry that much about it. *The Law of Enclosures* is what I wanted to write about—for a variety of reasons—and I was going to do it. You can't completely ignore the fact that a book is going to exist in a commercial context. That marketing, sales, audience appeal will come into play at some point. But you can't let it control your writing.

I think there is a very definite effect on my content. Of course, there is the ego driven part of me that wants to be read by everyone. I had conceived of a five book series when I was in college and it has changed tremendously. It changed when I came out, when my understanding of the world changed, and I guess by critical responses as well. *The Law of Enclosures* was originally about gay characters. I woke up in the middle of the night and thought "what if all of the deer turned red?" And I began to think of a story of a hermit in a forest. A gay hermit who was not in touch with nature. It is sort of embarrassing to recount. Too much symbolic emphasis. Sort of urban vs. Suburban squalor vs. a fake pastoral. But that changed when critics began presuming that the parents in *Martin and John* were my parents.

Bronski: One of the reasons *Martin and John* was praised was because of the risks you took. That book, as well as *The Law of Enclosures* breaks from what we see as traditional narrative, and most critics understood and appreciated the risks you took.

Peck: It's true. I am intrigued with the idea of challenging or destroying traditional narrative. Many critics and readers thought that I was Martin in my first novel, and that it was my family. I wanted to move that family to *The Law of Enclosures* and show that they are not victims, that they have their own lives. But more importantly I wanted to articulate—to expose the myth—how "autobiography" and "fiction" are so easily connected. By including an actual autobiographical section in *The Law of Enclosures*, the book challenges any easy answers.

Marketing

Bronski: But, again. This brings us back to the question of marketing. There is plenty of experimental fiction writing that does not garner critical or popular attention—which puts you in another double-bind. As a writer of smart, intelligent, experimental fiction how does the idea of reaching a wide audience affect your writing?

Peck: You are right. All of this does not really get to the harder questions of marketing and choice of content and style. I would like to be able to say that I simply write about what I want to write about, but of

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Writers on Writers



Tributes to the Lives and Works of Toni Cade

1995 Like 1992 Like 1989 Will Mark Me Forever

Toni Cade Bambara and Terri L. Jewell

by Cheryl Clarke

Our communities have suffered many losses. ["They are all falling around me," sings Bernice Reagan of freedom fighters who have died.] I never thought I would be so imposed upon by death as I was in 1989 when my fourteen-year-old nephew, Najeeb Harb, fell to his horrific death in New York City. My family counts his loss every day—and so do I. And will. Absence is a muthafucka—truly. Nineteen-ninety-five will mark me forever as surely as 1989 and as surely as 1992, when [my teacher and sister-] poet Audre Lorde, passed on over the Caribbean to some other blood-anointed place.

Toni Cade Bambara: 1939-1995

Bambara was a name Toni Cade gave herself around 1970, after the publication of the groundbreaking anthology, *The Black Woman*. In fact, it seems she named herself all her life. Born Miltona Mirken Cade in 1939, at age five she is said to have announced to her mother that she had renamed herself "Toni"—not short for anything. [And for me, who encountered her all-too-briefly at several crucial points in my life, the name] Toni will always be held to the standard set by Toni Cade Bambara. "Any dude who wants to hang with me can take my name [Bambara]," I remember hearing her say sometime around 1972.

[In the words of Ella Baker, another formidable black woman], Toni Cade Bambara was a "facilitator." She inspired a whole generation of people from all kinds of diasporas to do something, to take leadership, to, [as poet Nikki Finney said at Toni's memorial service] get a "plan." As a groping young writer, my experience of [this teacher, mentor, and beautiful star] Toni Cade Bambara, validates Finney's reminiscence. Around 1970 or '71, I attended a reading Toni did from the soon to be published *Gorilla, My Love*, when she was teaching at Livingston College (Rutgers University, 1969-'72). (Toni's article, "On the Issue of Roles" in *The Black Woman* had already moved me to feminism.) I was so taken by her performativeness, her fabulous ear for black urban East Coast language, her seriousness, and her side-splitting humor that I went up to her to ask her how she did it. But, of course, I couldn't appear so naive and needy. So, I asked a question about *The Black Woman* as subterfuge. "How'd you pull it together, Toni?" I asked [with mocking self-composure]. "A group of us got together, decided we had something to write, and wrote it," she answered crisply, looking back at me for further input, sort of underneath her eyes. I fumbled and just finally blurted out, "How do you just . . . write." She said genially, "I just to sit down and write. It's the only way, girl." [Other students wanted to speak with her, so I thanked her and receded from the space, troubled but resigned that there are no magic or failsafe systems of motivation.] That quick and pressed advice stood me in good stead. I got a plan. Many an artist, writer, scholar, intellectual, student, activist, and community got a plan because Toni Cade Bambara said, " . . . The most effective way to do it, is to do it" (1980). A serious sister, race-woman, and feminist, Toni Cade Bambara practiced freedom daily.

Almost ten years later, holding the first edition of Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua's *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, I encountered Toni Cade Bambara again, in another crucial location, created primarily by lesbian of color feminists. And there she was: writing the "Foreword" to *Bridge* (1981), urging us on to its promise, holding us—we "radical women of color" writers—accountable for fashioning "potent networks of all daughters of

TONI CADE BAMBARA



"[Bambara] sows in her wake understanding, humanity...this book is filled with both love and respect."

—WASHINGTON POST BOOK WORLD

the ancient mother cultures . . . an awesome . . . mighty . . . glorious work." How could we falter after this splendid exhortation?

Toni had literally spent her life seeing African-Americans be powerful: from childhood in Harlem, growing up among powerful African-American women and men. Margaret Busby, writing Bambara's obituary for *The Guardian* of London, gives this account:

. . . Her early involvement with books and writing was encouraged and influenced by her mother, an acolyte of the Harlem Renaissance...who later became active in the Women's League of Voters and, as Helen Cade Brehon, was a contributor to her daughter's landmark anthology.

(Dec. 12, 1995, p. 16)

continued on page 32

**Born 1954 in Louisville, Kentucky.
Nappy-headed, fatdyke who loves
to write, take pictures of inanimate
objects close up, and imagine that
things are better than they really
are....**

Terri Jewell

e Bambara, Terri Jewell and Essex Hemphill

Memory and Man*: Essex Hemphill 1957-1995

by Robert F. Reid-Pharr

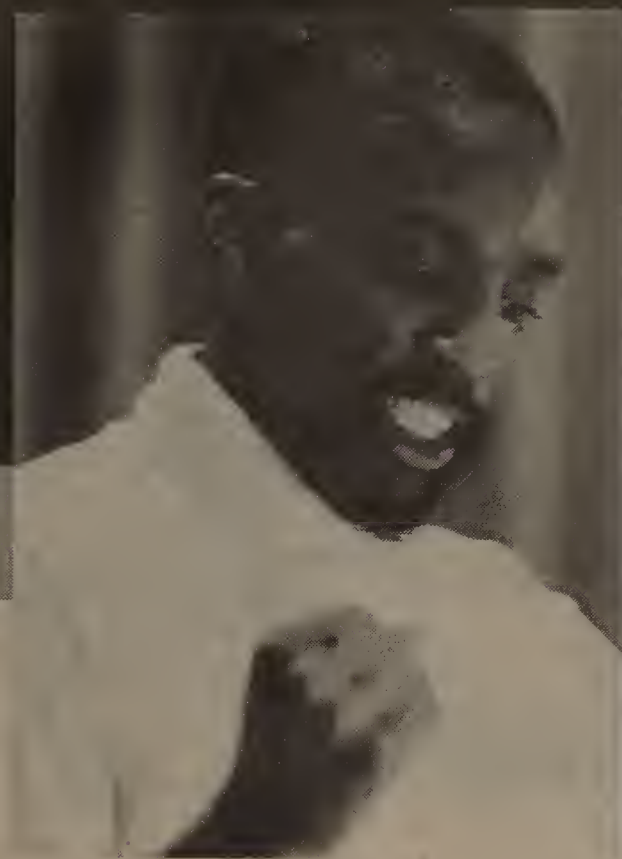
When I die,
my angels,
immaculate
Black diva
drag queens,
all of them
sequined
and seductive,
some of them will come back
to haunt you,
I promise,
honey chil'.

The funerals that I remember from my childhood were wonderful, spectacular events. We would give to our dead relatives and friends and indeed to all the lost members of our community, the pageantry, the glory, the wrenching evocation of love and loss that were most often missing from their lives. My great aunt with her leg severed at the knee, my uncle the stone alcoholic, my grandmother whose breast had been shriveled to an ugly black knot by the cancer that took her life, became at the moment of their deaths serene and peaceful, full of joy and hope, the intensely mourned members of a loving family left in this great, if difficult world. We would lay them out, in caskets of ebony and bronze, wail over their bodies, and then remark with satisfaction that they never looked better. We produced their deaths the way that Samuel Goldwyn produced Hollywood musicals. Unsightly blemishes were cleansed from our memories while our loved ones were consigned to God's bosom where they would root throughout eternity. Our loss was heaven's gain.

I am always there
for critical emergencies
graduations,
the middle of the night

I am the invisible son.
In the family photos
nothing appears out of character.
I smile as I serve my duty.

He had passed some two days earlier, they told me: ongoing illness, a fall, pneumonia, depression, anger, nothing out of the ordinary really. I was not shocked. I felt no pain, did not cry, did not stretch forth trembling hands unto a distant god, asking why. I still have not gotten furious, cursed the world, fantasized for even a moment about weapons, armies, some great and purifying revolution. No, that would be too easy and Essex was not easy. At the funeral his mother testified to his hav-



**Remember then
that he was a nigger
and a faggot, one
who died tragically
of AIDS long before
he wanted to go.**

ing given himself over to Christ a month before his death. He humbled himself, she reported with joy, before his savior, the savior, in the very church where his funeral was held. The minister remembered him as a good son and family member then warned against the dangers of alternative lifestyles. The friends who told me this were horrified. I listened to their stories, missing many of the details. Instead, I registered the anguish, tried to capture in my memory the odd quality in their voices as they shouted out disbelief that Essex, our Essex, could so easily be taken from us and buried by the very silence that he struggled against so fiercely.

To those of us who knew him, touched him, struggled and cared for and with him, he was a giant, a great poet, performer, activist and friend. He was indeed the very center not only of an emergent Black gay culture, but also and importantly the center of everything that was right—and righteous—in this country. He was the personification of our hope and pride. And yet he was a man. One who liked to laugh, to talk loud Negro talk, to smoke reefer, drink whiskey and fuck. And yes he died like a man with great strength and nobility, but also with marked fear and pain. He pulled back as his health began to fail, giving access to only a handful of friends, making it more convenient for others to overlook the reality of his illness and imminent death.

Dearly Beloved
my flesh like all flesh
will be served
at the feast of worms.
I am looking for sign of God
as I sodomize my prayers.

I have begun saying to those who will listen that with Essex gone, my childhood comes to an end. There is no one in my life who captures that regal, almost breathtaking quality that was Essex's. There is no one whom I approach with the same odd combination of familiarity and respect, with whom I always feel somewhat nervous even as I am enveloped in acceptance and love. Indeed Essex was among the last of the living black, gay men who helped more

than a decade ago to initiate me into a life of homosexual, intellectualism and cultural activism. I have long since taken to repeating the names of my brothers who have gone before me like a mantra, anxious words thrown against the darkness: Joseph Beam, Ray Melrose, David Frechette, Rory Buchanan, Donald Woods, Roy Gonsalves, Assotto Saint, Marlon Riggs, the list continues. I needed them so deeply. My lust for their flesh, their intellects, their spirits was so immaculate, so wonderfully new, almost surreal. And yet it seems that always they pass away from me just as I recognize that they are not gods, but men, beings whose fallibility and mortality is the very thing that brings them within my grasp, that allows both intimacy and love.

Occasionally I long
to fuck a dead man
I never slept with.
I pump up my temperature
imagining his touch
as I stroke my wishbone,
wanting to raise him up alive,
wanting my fallen seed
to produce him full-grown
and breathing heavy
when it shoots across my chest;
wanting him upon me,
alive and aggressive,
intent of his sweet buggery
even if my eyes do
lack a trace of blue.

And us? And now? There are those who will tell you that our communities and our struggles have been irrevocably debilitated by all this death, that with so many warriors gone we have become demoralized, battle weary and ready to surrender. And yet, we remain so wonderfully vibrant and, dare I say, alive. Strangely, then, we have become masters of death and dying, turning human anguish and tragedy into remarkably beautiful, if heavy-handed, drama. The culture industry loves the story of the good homosexual come to a bad end. My friends, on the other

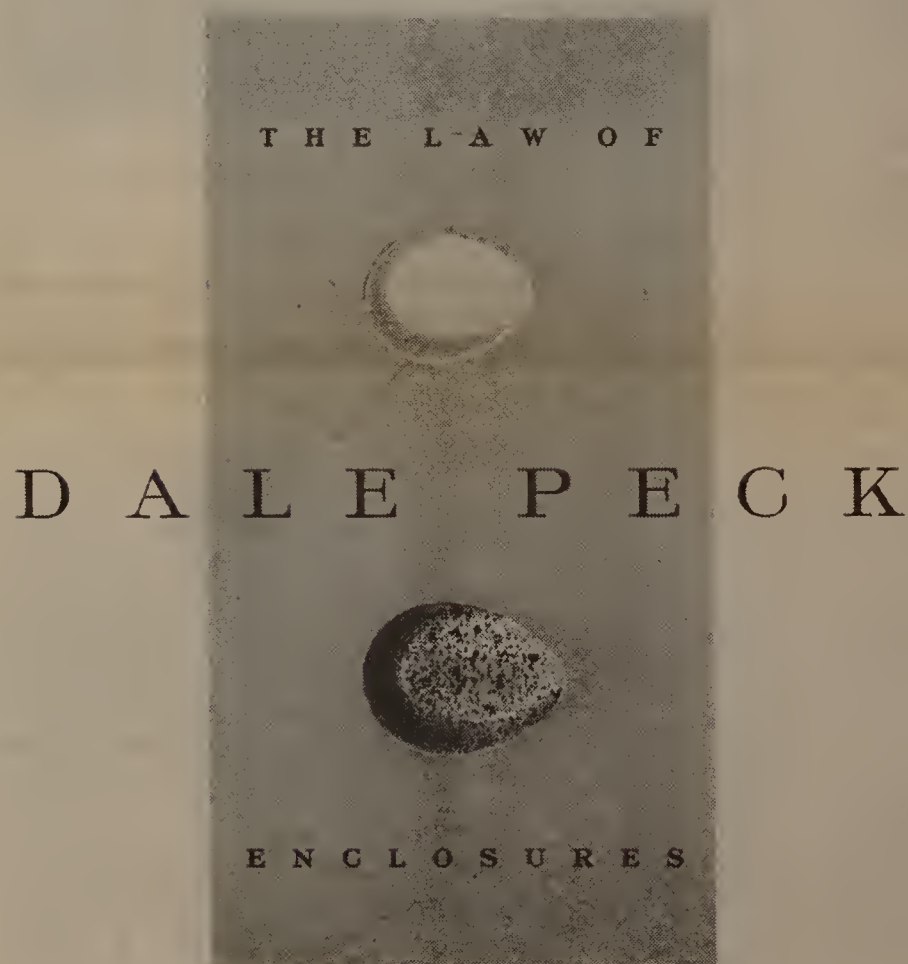
continued on page 34

Exiles from the Family

The Law of Enclosures by Dale Peck

Farrar Strauss Gireaux
1995; 306 pp
Cloth \$23.00 ISBN 0-374-18419-4

Review by Michael Roberts



This book embodies a recent trend in gay art towards appropriating a special role for us as exiles from the American Family...

Philip Larkin's gloomy quatrain perfectly captures the mood if not the moral of Dale Peck's astonishing second novel: "Man hands on misery to man,/ It deepens like a coastal shelf./ Get out as quickly as you can,/ And don't have any kids yourself." Peck's answer to Family Values is his devastating portrait of the forty-year marriage of Henry and Beatrice (later Hank and Bea); it may be the finest thing of its kind since Albee's George and Martha first climbed those well-worn stairs thirty years ago. The "Law of Enclosure" of the title is the unalterable law by which men and women seem doomed to embroider the patterns of their mutual misery on one another and upon their children, as each generation's disappointments with their parents get recapitulated and recast in the coupling choices they themselves make. Like our parents and our children, we are all encased and immured in our families from our first breath to our last.

The book's striking structural feature is that Hank and Bea's story is told in intermingled scenes from the beginning and end of their lives together. But in a stroke that heightens the metaphorical resonance of this alpha and omega of marital misery, the two segments, though forty years apart, unfold in a simultaneous present that is recognizably America in the early '90s. The fires of the Gulf War flicker ominously in the background of these people's entire lives, as if to symbolize the eternal war of the sexes, and of parents upon their children, which Peck sees everywhere he looks. And into the middle of that narrative is intercut an excruciating first-person account of what must be presumed to be the lives of the author's own parents, the mother who died when he was three of what may or may not have been the consequences of spousal abuse, and the father whose violence and mayhem have somehow not extinguished the son's love for him or the gifts with which he now composes an immortalizing, if devastating lovesong. Despite only a few false notes, it is a daring effort that is remarkable in the second novel of a 28-year old.

Peck's primal metaphor is the brain tumor that protrudes like a robin's egg out of the back of Henry's head from childhood. He calls it Candy, which turns out to be a conflation of his parents' names, in case we had any doubt about who to thank for our troubles. His parents' script is that he should die, but he doesn't, and the visible cancer is - natch! - what first attracts Bea to him. She has been similarly extruded from a family in which the parents' passion for each other has left no room for children. In other words, kids always lose; they are at best an irrelevancy and at worst an obstruction, as husband and wife conduct their dance of death. Little ones do well just to dodge the flying objects, and it's small wonder that Hank and Bea's kids won't come near their parents in their golden years. As Bea puts it, she and Hank did nothing to their children: "We did it all to each other. . . We just made them watch." Hank makes the astute observation that love is "greedy, . . exclusive, and exclusionary." No one survives this conflict unscathed.

Peck's unlovely picture of the world's oldest institution is really a kind of requiem for what Myra, another marital survivor, calls "long, meaningless marriages. Wives waiting for their husbands to die," and vice versa: "that was the game they were playing, the war they were fighting, and the only thing one got for fighting was the chance to play, to fight again, . . it was never a game fought to be won, only not to be lost." People cannot touch one another, but must communicate from behind impenetrable walls. "Forty years," says Hank, "and all I ever wanted to do was touch her." Forster's rosy injunction ("Only connect") turns out to be a ludicrous impossibility in this infernal landscape. The radical truth here revealed is that we can come no closer to one another than our bodies, and that is not enough: "Everything else I will never touch. Everything important is hidden from me."

Peck takes his biggest risks in the book's no holds barred autobiographical mid-section. It is not surprising that we here find some of the strongest writing as well as occasional embarrassments (e.g., the family cemetery, Mother as an angel in heaven). "Lamentations," is apt as a title, since Peck finds congenial the role of Biblical prophet, with the sharpest thrusts reserved for Dad. The book's dedication ("for my father Dale") must be scant consolation for the dismemberment the old man gets here. The section is a

continued on page 21

Rat Family Robinson

Rat Bohemia by Sarah Schulman

Dutton
1995
Cloth \$19.95 ISBN 0-525-93790-0

Review by Anna Wilson

In an appendix to *Rat Bohemia*, Sarah Schulman provides for us the opening chapters of *Good and Bad*, the novel that is cementing the fame of one of her characters, the despicably closeted writer Muriel Kay Starr—the novel, in other words, which Schulman herself might have written had she abandoned her mission as chronicler of contemporary gay life for the comforts of the literary mainstream. It's a fine postmodern gesture, at once reminding us of the ficticity of narrative and displaying, should we be in any doubt, Schulman's writerly skills. She wants us to know that she doesn't have to be a lesbian novelist: *Good and Bad* is full of straight people having interior monologues, just like they do in the arty, canonical texts reviewed by the *New York Times Book Review*. And Schulman's suave joke neatly brings to the foreground a question that's been lurking in the shadows of *Rat Bohemia* all along: just what is a lesbian writer supposed to be writing now?

It used to be easy: write a coming-out story and change the world. Lesbians with books in their hands, reading their way to lesbian nation. In Schulman's post-revolutionary vision, however, hope for change is a thing of the past. Her present is a place of coalition, resistance, and—if one's skillful and lucky—survival. In these times, novels are not models of identity formation or manuals for becoming your own glorious self. They're not accounts of personal and political triumph. And they certainly don't provide distraction or escape.

Schulman writes about marginal urban life in the '90s, about gay men who die and about lesbians who, mostly, just scrape by. It's an excruciatingly familiar story but nonetheless one that Schulman can justifiably claim needs to be retold. The challenge, of course, is to make this bleak reality a text that anyone will want to read without mitigating the horror or providing false comfort. Schulman's solution in *Rat Bohemia* is rage: her novel rages and

screams and throws itself on the floor, drumming its heels. Like the put-upon bear in Joanna Russ' *The Female Man*, embodiment of the woman who has Finally Had Enough, and who turns on her tormentors declaring (in capitals) "SOMEBODY ASIDES ME IS GONNA RUE THIS HERE PARTICULAR DAY," Schulman launches herself, teeth bared, toward a somnolent America.

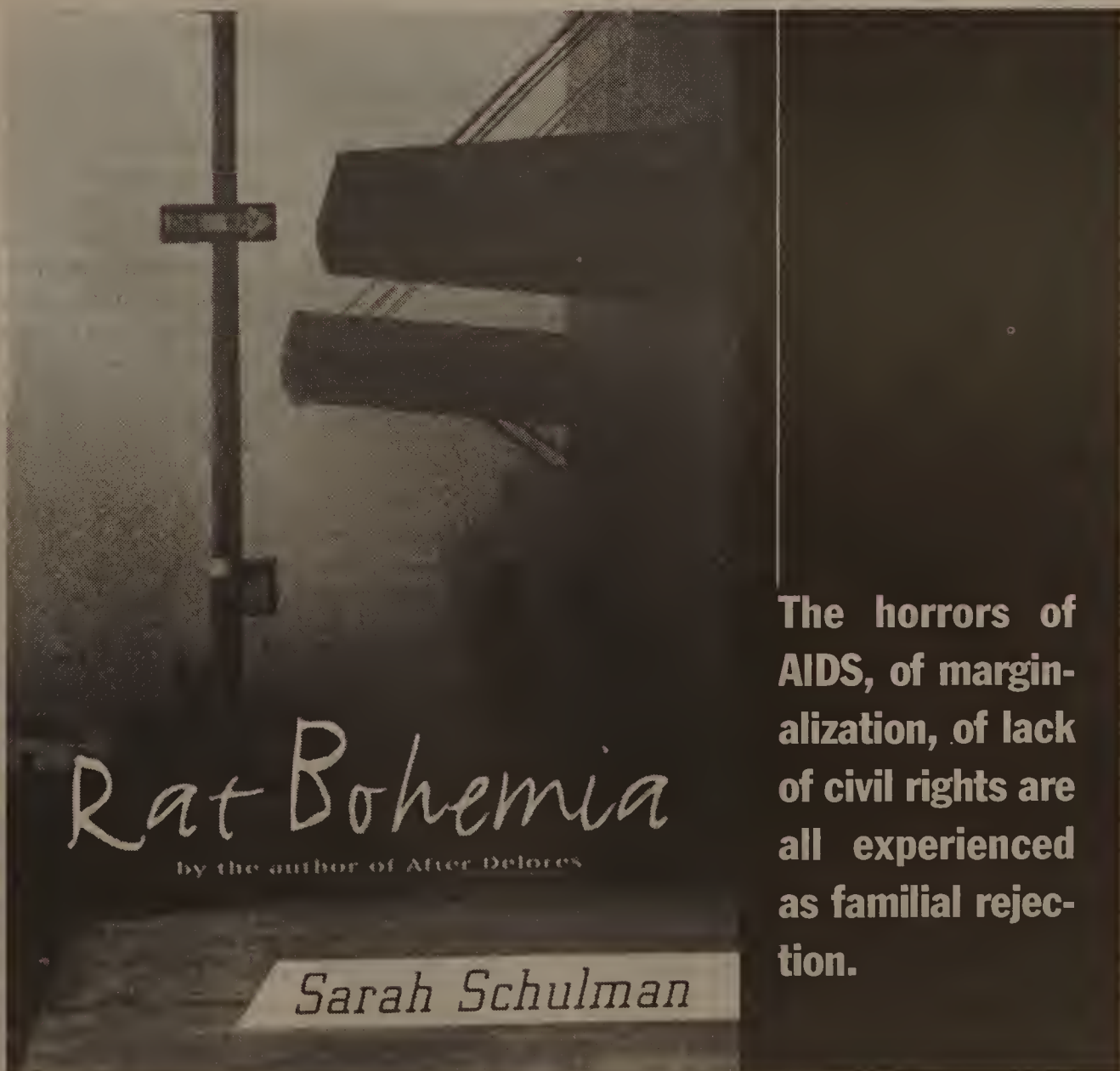
The particular target of Schulman's attack is the family: the family that does not love its gay child. All her lesbian and gay characters obsess, in vain, about their rejecting mothers and fathers, longing hopelessly for just one gesture of acceptance or acknowledgement. All fathers, mothers, and siblings turn away, deny, choose normalcy, ignore the pain, ignore the dying. The horrors of AIDS, of marginalization, of lack of civil rights, are all experienced as familial rejection: "There's nothing on earth that could kill us more efficiently than parental indifference," one of the narrators says, watching his body decay as his T-cell count goes down.

Since Schulman has a long record as an activist, I take it that this psychologizing account of the evils of modern America is at once a metaphor for society's failure to recognize its pervert members and a

satire on the Right's production of "family values" as solution to all ills. She can't really believe that if Dad suddenly came through, lesbians wouldn't be miserable and poor, and gay men would stop dying—but her characters seem to. They blame Mom for everything, with the result that *Rat Bohemia* is in some ways a curiously apolitical book.

Finally, about those rats. Rats are everywhere in the novel, literally and symbolically. As symptoms of urban breakdown, they loom hugely in vacant lots. As indomitable colonizers, they serve to represent the survival skills of the dwellers in a lesbian underworld. And yet the narrative keeps them always at a distance, as if it's important that the characters in Schulman's cityscape should live among rats without becoming one with them. But rats, too, have a social organization, albeit one that's not recognizably familial in structure; it's a model that might have functioned to fill the gap that the neglectful family leaves in the lives of its gay sons and lesbian daughters. This is an opportunity that Schulman creates but doesn't quite take: to allow us to abandon nostalgia for Mom and Dad in favor of our extended rat networks.

Anna Wilson is a novelist and a critic. Her most recent novel is *Hatching Stones*.



The horrors of AIDS, of marginalization, of lack of civil rights are all experienced as familial rejection.

Those Who Got Away...

All-American Girl by Robin Becker

University of Pittsburgh Press
March 1996

Review by Clare Coss

Robin Becker's third book of poems, *All-American Girl*, is the inspired and persistent journey of a restless spirit. Alone and adrift, she casts and recasts her anchor into what will hold: the language of poetry. The title, *All-American Girl*, conjures up an All-American Dream fifties movie, maybe young willowy cheerleader Jane Fonda playing opposite cute basketball player Tony Perkins in *Tall Story*.

Becker—lesbian, Jewish, privileged, middle-aged—plays against the foil of her title. We time-travel from the Philadelphia of her childhood to France, Italy, New Mexico, Wyoming, and Boston. She explores Jewish culture, family tragedy, love and loss, gender play and parry with lyric richness and dynamic tonalities. She charts a course through poignant stories from childhood, love's last stands, the dazzle and disappointment of sportive lesbian pursuits—all driven by the underlying theme of coming to terms with a sister's death.

Haunted by the complexity and complications of her relationship with her sister and family, the poet's spirit longs to be free. The pervasive torment of a sister's suicide is introduced in the first poem, "Shopping." Fearing her lover will walk out, the speaker tries to buoy herself up with a sharply snapping cadence:

I'll order the leather duster and swagger
If we can't make peace
across the plaza in Santa Fe,
cross-dressing for the girls.

Then she stakes down the course of her seemingly cavalier escape into shopping.

If you never touch me again,
I'll do what my mother did
after she buried my sister:
outfitted herself in an elegant suit
for the rest of her life.

But Becker refuses to bury her feelings under a swashbuckling cover. In "The Crypto-Jews" is a pledge to unearth the hidden:

I learned Fra Alfonso listed "holding
philosophical discussions"
as a Jewish crime. I think of the loud fights
between me and my father when he would
scream that only a Jew
could love another Jew.

Referring to Crypto Jews in New Mexico discovering their families' hidden religious practices:

What could it mean, this Hebrew script,
in grandmother's Catholic hand? Oh,
New World, we drift
from eviction to eviction, to underground...

We return to the painful life of her medicated doomed sister, who tried to be "All-American." Grandmother insisted they get "nose jobs," as her own three daughters had. The speaker's rebellion is contrasted to her sister's acquiescence in "Too Jewish."

You'll be more yourself, my Bubbie argued.
I already am myself, I shouted.

Years later, in Jerusalem, I bought a Star
of David and hung it around my neck.
Why so big? she asked. The whole world
has to know you're Jewish?

When her bandages came off
my sister's nose still lacked perfection.
Look, he did the best he could,
Bubbie snorted, always a defender of doctors.

Becker braids the black ribbon the mother wears in grief for her sister with all the horseshow prize ribbons they proudly won as children. The bright colors of the winners flutter in sharp contrast to the second stanza of "The Ribbon."

In the morning
she will pin it to her dress
and everyone she meets will know
she has completed one life
and entered the ring
for another.

The poet's quest to free herself from the family agony reminds me of Audre Lorde's poem "The One Who Got Away," in her last collection, *The Marvelous Arithmetics of Distance*. What are the feelings about siblings left behind when one escapes the emotional confines? Lorde:

Each day she lives
a bright ransom
going away beyond the guilty

Becker too, writes of a sister who gets away—propelled by her love of words, the liberation of her lesbian identity, her rebellious and strong nature. She holds the wheel steady as she steers against crosscurrents that threaten to toss and pull her back

When it comes to the women in her life, Becker takes pleasure in writing about the full enjoyment of the moment, even though the promise falls through.



Robin Becker

© Miriam Goodman 1995

into the past. Several poems capture revelatory childhood moments. Her tellings weave precise imagery through a seemingly innocent child's point of view. An early encounter with racism on a family cruise is faced in "Port au Prince, 1960." Becker knows Haiti's recent history will project a disturbing background on the screen of this poem.

All morning, black boys have been diving
for change
from splintering rowboats. . .

Against the azure Caribbean Sea
their bodies shine. . . they shoot up
like geysers, like fountains of oil, holding one
fist above their heads to signify success . . .

I squeeze
my sister's hand; we have been told to stay
together, to walk directly behind our parents,
to avoid eye contact. Before I step onto the
island
I know that I am different from the people
who live here. I know that I have something
another child needs.

In "My Grandmother's Crystal Ball" the speaker savors the hot summer beach at Atlantic City and her awakening desire for girls:

five girl cousins too old
to be naked to the waist and wild as boys.

continued on page 21

"Virtually Straight"

Virtually Normal
by Andrew Sullivan

Alfred A. Knopf
Sept. 1995, 209 pp.
Cloth \$22.00 ISBN 0-679-42382-6

Review by Debbie Gould

Any book about homosexuality with the word "normal" prominently placed in its title raises my suspicions. In his book *Virtually Normal: An Argument About Homosexuality*, Andrew Sullivan uncritically accepts the conventional definition of "normal," and perhaps that assent, more than anything else, accounts for the limits of his vision of a world in which he, a white gay man with stature, would like to live. Rather than discarding the very notion of "normalcy," Sullivan, editor of *The New Republic*, prefers to place homosexuals in a category he calls "virtually normal," and thus deserving of nothing less (and nothing more) than "public equality," that is, equal treatment by the government. In other words, being virtually normal entitles homosexuals to full "public" equality but, being only virtually normal, we must accept the persistence of discrimination in the "private" realm.

Sullivan never explores the possibility that the very act of delineating the concept of "normal" in opposition to "abnormal" is fundamental to the oppression of lesbians and gay men, or "homosexuals," as Sullivan prefers to call us. He could have called his book *Virtuously Normal* because that sentiment thoroughly colors his argument about homosexuality. He describes a conservative view of the homosexual subculture in the following way:

[a life where] emotional commitments are fleeting, promiscuous sex is common, disease is rampant...and standards of public decency, propriety, and self-

restraint are flaunted....[A] way of life that deliberately subverts gender norms in order to unsettle the virtues that make family life possible, ridicules heterosexual life, and commits itself to an ethic of hedonism, loneliness, and deceit. (p.106)

Sullivan makes no objection to these anti-gay prejudices; his only complaint is that conservatives have failed to grasp the opportunity of guiding the many "depraved" homosexuals into more "virtuous" living.

In the body of the book, Sullivan outlines and critiques four politics of homosexuality—conservative, liberal, prohibitionist, and liberationist—before dismissing all four and offering his own.

...the very act of delineating the concept of "normal" in opposition to "abnormal" is fundamental to the oppression of lesbians and gay men...

Andrew Sullivan



Conservatives, according to Sullivan, believe that homosexuals should be allowed their private liberty. However, to deter homosexually-inclined children and waverers, state institutions should maintain public inequality because homosexuality threatens the heterosexual family and its role in reproduction. According to Sullivan, conservatives are at a juncture because the private tolerance-public discrimination solution is no longer viable in our liberal democracy. If conservatives continue to oppose public equality for homosexuals, Sullivan claims, they will be increasingly isolated, impelled to align with the religious Right. Conservatives should instead open their tent to the increasing numbers of "ordinary, unsterotypical, and culturally conservative homosexuals living openly in society at large." (p.124) For those homosexuals who are still living "depraved" lives, Sullivan appeals to conservatives to "construct social institutions and guidelines to modify and change that behavior for the better." (p.107) Finally, conservatives should move "toward an alliance with conservative trends among homosexuals and a cooptation of responsible gay citizenship." (p.132) To that end, conservatives should support equal access to the military and to marriage for homosexuals.

The Right to be a Bigot

Down-playing conservatives' vehement opposition to equality under the law for homosexuals, Sullivan suggests a rosy scenario if conservatives follow his advice. Acceptance of technical legal equality will enable them to ignore calls for anti-discrimination laws that extend beyond the public realm into the "private" areas of free association and contract. Sullivan is a quotable catch for conservatives: a gay man who opposes laws which protect gay people from private discrimination.

Liberals, according to Sullivan, believe that the state should legislate non-discrimination measures to protect homosexuals in the "private" as well as "public" realm. In one of his more controversial points, Sullivan asserts his opposition to such legislation. Following classic liberalism, Sullivan believes that the state should not interfere with a citizen's "right" to discriminate in "private" matters. Intolerant heterosexuals should have such rights, to call a lesbian a bulldagger or to join a private club which excludes homosexuals. A boss should have the freedom to fire a homosexual and a landlord should be able to refuse to rent to him/her, solely on the basis of homosexuality. Liberalism is failing, in Sullivan's eyes, because it legislates against each citizen's right to be a bigot.

The prohibitionists, a group that "has emerged with particular force in the Republican Party," (p.172) believe that homosexuality is an abomination which must be deterred by legal punishment or, failing that, cured, since its legitimization threatens the very possibility of heterosexual union, and therefore of civilization itself. Using the prohibitionists tools, the Bible and natural law philosophy, Sullivan whittles away at their argument, optimistically concluding that prohibitionism is a waning politics because of its extremism and internal contradictions.

Dis-missing Liberation

Sullivan reserves most of his contempt for the liberationists. According to Sullivan, liberationists see homosexuality as a social construction. Human freedom is possible only when each person is free of all social constructs and can choose to be and do whatever s/he wants. In a chapter both incoherent and contradictory, Sullivan invents a simplistic category of liberationist politics that bears little resemblance to the gay liberation politics of social transformation. For instance, he describes ACT UP as an example of

continued on page 22

NORMAL

AN ARGUMENT

ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY

ANDREW SULLIVAN

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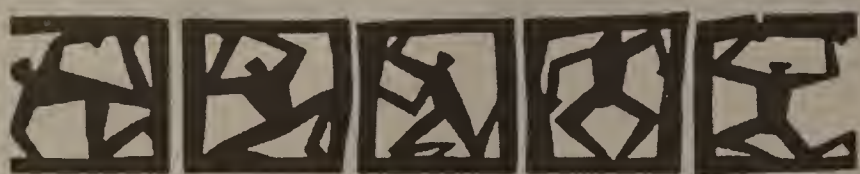
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A Horrific Wonderland

The End of Alice by A.M. Homes

Scribner, Cloth, 271 pages
1996

Reviewed by Michael Bronski

"A stopped clock is right twice a day" is the epigram that A. M. Homes has chosen to introduce her new novel, *The End of Alice*, and its choice is as perfect, ironic, startling, and precise as everything we have come to expect from her work. The quote is from Lewis Carroll and Homes has shaped, fashioned much of *The End of Alice* to reflect and refract Carroll's own disturbing and unsettling novel. Whereas Carroll took us down the rabbit hole and through the looking glass, Homes has chosen to propel us, headlong, into a troubling brave new world of sexual obsession, pedophilia, violence, and — is it even hinted at? — redemption.

There is no doubt that *The End of Alice* is ambitious. Like Homes's other work—the novels *Jack* and *The Country of Mothers* and her short story collection, *The Safety of Objects*—sets out to both dazzle us with its technical proficiency and make us re-view the world as we know it. In both structure and content *The End of Alice* pushes the envelope. Scribner, the book's publisher is acutely aware of this. In a letter, which accompanied advance readers copies, editor Nan Graham wrote "I apologize in advance to those of you who will find the book too disturbing." And for a world in which discussions—and fictions—about children, sexuality, memory, and consent are becoming more and more difficult, this is, indeed, invigorating and difficult material. Graham's letter—a cross between a warning and a public relations tease—is on target; the material here is tough going.

Memory and Desire

Alice is narrated by a 56 year old man, a pedophile, who has been imprisoned for more than two decades for an unspecified—until the end of the book—crime that involved a twelve year old girl named Alice. He is famous for his crime and receives both fan mail as well as requests for journalistic and scientific inquiry. The structure of *Alice* is a correspondence between himself and a nineteen year old woman who is in the process of discovering her own passions for young boys. She has turned to the prisoner for advice and he is more than willing to tend her questions and move her along the path. As the young woman spots her prize—Matt, a twelve and a half-year old "and on the verge, ripe"—and instigates a very active sexual relationship with him, her mentor (with wit, impatience, brio, and a nearly sadistic sense of pleasure) urges her along every inch of the way. We are presented with snippets of her letters but almost all of the detailed narrative is given through his eyes. We also see his life in prison—although an ostensible heterosexual he has had a many-year trade relationship with Clayton, a gay man (a Princeton graduate who wears his school pin through his left nipple) who is in prison for fucking and then killing his tricks. Interspersed with the progress of his mentee's story—girl gets boy... and, then what?—is the reverse journey of his memory: of growing up, of sexually inappropriate behavior by his mother (she has the 12 year old narrator suck on her breasts, puts his hand in her vagina, and places menstrual blood lipstick on him) and his relationship with Alice, the love of his life. As the book moves both forward and backwards, the twin plots begin to merge and diverge until we come to the revelations of each of their fates.

"It is a poor sort of memory that only works backwards" the White Queen remarks in *Through the Looking Glass*, and indeed A.M. Homes is trying for



A.M. Homes

something quite spectacular here for not only is she running parallel stories on different time schedules, she is also attempting to chronicle cultural memory as well and place the sexual desire of and for children into a critical context that both illuminates those specific eroticisms as well as enlarges our understanding of sexual desire and eroticism in general. *The End of Alice* is quite conscious of its literary antecedents. We are reminded not only of Lewis Carroll's two books, but of Laclos's *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, Dennis Cooper's works particularly the early pieces such as *The Tenderness of Wolves*, of Brett Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*, of *The Silence of the Lambs* (the engaging narrator is a first, if somewhat less contrived, cousin to Doctor Lector), Nabokov's *Lolita* (to which there are a plethora of specific references) and even such diverse literati as Flannery O'Connor, Goethe, and James M. Barrie.

Distorting Mirrors

But while *The End of Alice* looks back on all of this writing it also attempts—quite forcefully and valiantly—to move forward. Homes intends the book to be a meditation on sex, sexuality, and sexual orientation: what does it mean for a heterosexual to get fucked while in prison? is a sexual desire for children a specific orientation? On memory and time: is sexual desire shaped by childhood experiences? can you stop time in memory and how often is that stopped clock right then? And on violence in a culture that both encourages tabooed eroticism while at the same time condemning it, she suggests the question: is his pathology congenital or primarily a reaction to a moralistic, forbidding society? Like

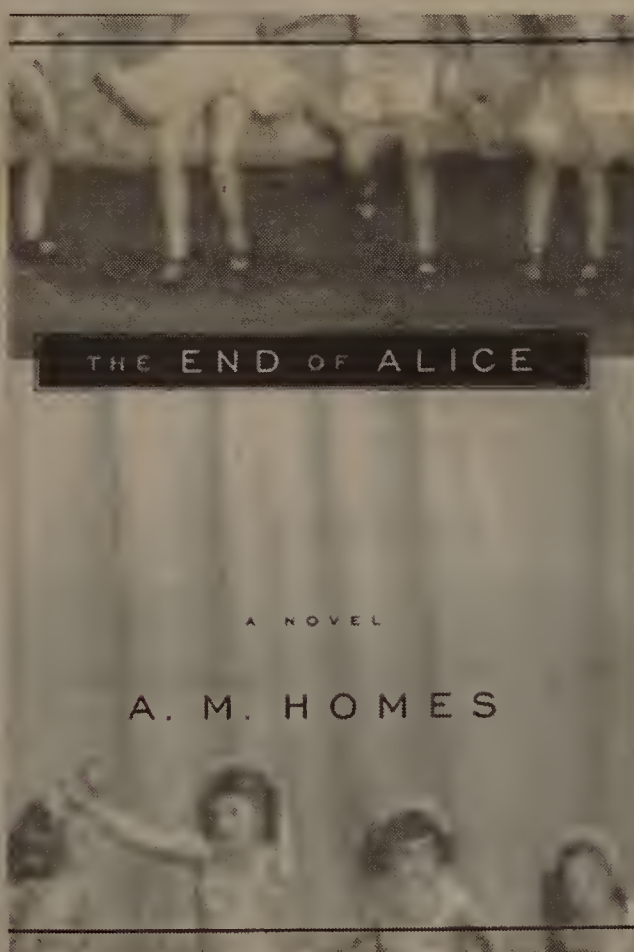
Carroll's Alice, A.M. Homes wants us to go through the looking glass and see things as they might be: reversed, skewered, out-of-sorts, and quite possibly correct. Her instinct is to shock and startle us, to make us question common preconceptions and opinions, to seduce us and then force us—repel us—away. The examples she uses—childhood sexual experience, physical and emotional abuse, sexual violence—all have specific meaning and resonances in our culture and, on some level, she is insisting that we re-examine and re-label them. Like Lewis Carroll's Humpty-Dumpty who refuses to let words retain their usual meaning—"when I use a word it means exactly what I want it to mean...neither more nor less. The question is who is to be master—that's all"—Homes wants to create a system in which the ascribed meaning of these acts and activities is questioned. She may not be sure what they mean now, but they certainly don't mean what they used to mean.

Given this, the question that must be asked about *The End of Alice* is, exactly what is A.M. Homes saying? There are strong suggestions that she is taking the position that we are all

(and the novel's?) ambivalence about sexuality shines through:

I expect to be fucked, but instead there is the heart-stopping tickle of a tongue between my legs, coming at me from the back, licking the long hairs, teasing the tops of my thighs, tonguing me in places a man is rarely touched. He is kissing my ass, licking my loving piles. He parts my cheeks, my white mooney mounds, and his mouth is there tonguing my tushy hole. Too much. Too good. I am too old for something new I shake, rattle, tremble and begin to fill again with blood.... [I]n his desperate depression he is making himself what he thinks I want him to be—a lover. I am an old man set in my ways. I will kill Clayton before I let him do this again.

Homes is too ambitious to back off from looking at hard questions. The narrator's murderous instincts here are triggered not by a homosexual encounter, but by the presumption of intimacy, by the implied demand that he be both subject and object. Homes insists that we probe her characters



As with Dennis Cooper, or Laclos, for that matter, it is a highly moral work that makes its points by portraying (what many see) as immoral behavior.

pedophiles; that sexual attraction is on a continuum and we are all capable of sexual desire (if not action) with children. She is also questioning the very categories of sexual classification—what is heterosexuality? What is pedophilia? What is homosexuality?—and when the young woman ends up having sex with her obsession's father, we are forced into questioning even more so the idea of youth and age, of consent and desire. When he demands that she shove her fingers up his ass we question—as we do with the prison sex scenes—how sexual activity is connected with presumed sexual identity; how sexual desire is manifested physically. How simply confusing and appalling sexual desire sometimes is. In a shocking scene in which Clayton unexpectedly rims the narrator before fucking him, the character's

desires and actions, no matter how distasteful or foreign to us. But the book ends up lacking the focus and the sustained intensity to make us face all, or even any of them, with the vigilance and the scrutiny that would have made us tremble, or shake, deeply, our faith in what we believe now.

Not that Homes doesn't try to dislodge our status-quo thinking. Her descriptions—from inside the mind of the narrator—startle and disturb.

I thought of my girls and their unsuspecting parts. Surprised, temporarily taken back, horrified by my inspection, but always beneath the gentility of my touch, the firmness of my hand, my tongue, my member they surrendered. Slowly they allowed themselves to be laid out, spread.

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"By What Means of What Magic..."

Thinking About the Longstanding Problems of Virtue and Happiness (Essays, A Play, Two Poems, and A Prayer)

By Tony Kushner

The Theater Communications Group
November 1995; 240 pp
Cloth \$25.95 ISBN 1-55936-106-9
Paper \$13.95 ISBN 1-55936-100-X

by Christopher J. Hogan

Tony Kushner's book, *Thinking About the Longstanding Problems of Virtue and Happiness (Essays, A Play, Two Poems, and A Prayer)*, is, as one could probably deduce from the title, quite pretentious. Most writers would not be pleased to have a collection of their writings labeled "pretentious," but Kushner just might like it. In the essay "On Pretentiousness," Kushner says that a play should seem "as though all the yummy nutritious ingredients you've thrown into it have almost-but-not-quite succeeded in overwhelming the entire design." (page 61) That neatly describes all of the writing in his new book.

Kushner revels in language. Take, for example, his description of how the queen within himself talks of sex:

In the air are the soft sibilants and susurrations, the whispered syllables and invitations, the words that wend serpentine towards perdition or redemption; and the liquid flow of breath; and everywhere suddenly there is a generosity and an opulence and a drama arisen out of nothing, and this, this my darling, is the magic of sex. (page 17)

Few writers can pull off such flurries of language, and Kushner flaunts them. He makes no apologies for his inflated rhetoric.

It is not just Kushner's style that nearly overwhelms us with its grandiosity, but also the content of his writings. Everything is stuffed with references, allusions, and quotes; theories, counter-theories, and

debate; politics, culture, and art. He draws heavily upon his own experience as a Jew and a homosexual, but those are just starting points for him. In the best tradition of progressive writing, he makes linkages among seemingly disparate movements. His writing is grounded in the "political traditions—from organized labor, from the civil rights and black power movements, from feminist and homosexual liberation movements, from movements for economic reform—which postulate democracy as an ongoing project, as a dynamic process." (page 9)

Kushner defends his ambitious reach by explaining, "Embracing pretentiousness as a trope, as a stratagem and a tool...enables us to make literary and perhaps political hay out of the distance between what we would like to have done, and what we have actually accomplished." (page 67) It is the "pretenders" who can change the world for better or for worse. Kushner admits that this has often been a tool of fascists with whom we may not want to be associated; however, it is their strategy, not their politics, from which we should learn.

Thinking About the Longstanding Problems of Virtue and Happiness both succeeds and fails in "making literary and political hay" out of pretentiousness. The individual pieces flirt dangerously with becoming just a bit too pretentious. On occasion, they even cross the line. Ironically, it is "On Pretentiousness" which reaches too far most often. None, however, collapses under the weight of all that it is carrying. The essays, play, poems and prayer are all smart, provocative, and well crafted. Kushner's sharp wit makes them very fun to read too.

The book as a whole, on the other hand, does not come together as it should. Here, the ingredients have overwhelmed the entire design. The pieces seem to be unified only by the fact that Kushner wrote all of them. His style and politics are consis-

"I don't know what power it is in human beings that keeps us going against indescribable forces of destruction."

Kushner

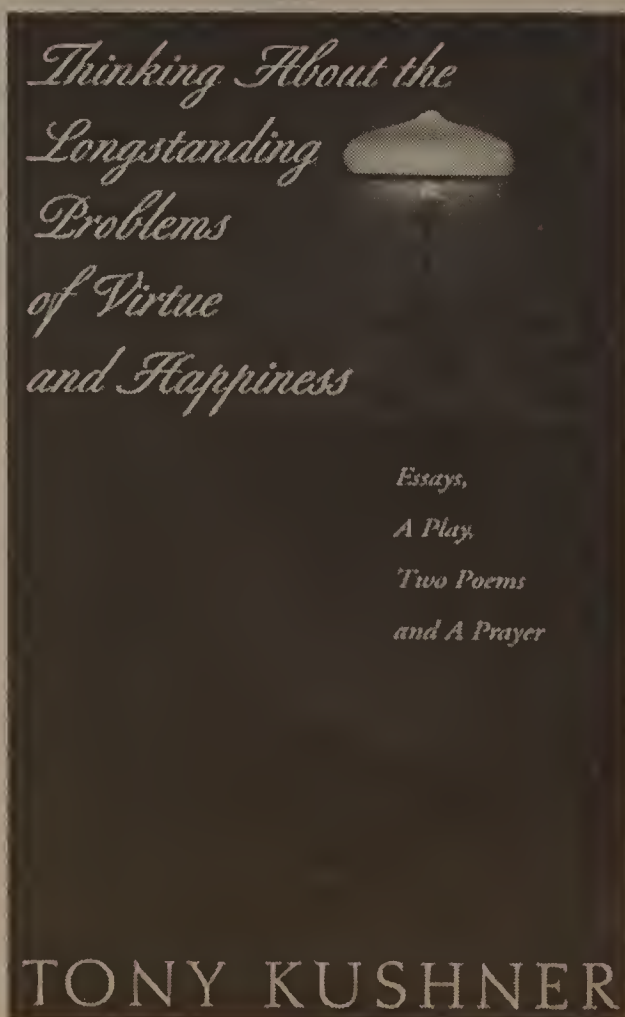
tent throughout, yet they aren't enough to hold everything together. While it is certainly challenging to have prose, dramatic writing, and poetry in the same collection, this is not as jarring as one might expect. It would not be so difficult to move from one form to another if there was more thematic flow among the works. We don't even get a feeling for Kushner's progression as a writer, since the pieces were written over a relatively short span of time.

The heart of this book is the play, *Slavs! Thinking About the Longstanding Problems of Virtue and Happiness*. Kushner is, of course, most famous as a playwright. Like *Angels in America*, *Slavs!* combines complex social and political issues and manages to turn them into compelling theater. Set in the years 1985 and 1992, *Slavs!* explores the failures of the Soviet Union. While the action is all fairly recent, it is firmly connected to the longer history of the nation.

The epilogue scene of *Slavs!* takes place in "Heaven, a gloomy, derelict place like a city after an earthquake." (page 179) There, Vodya Domik, an eight-year-old girl killed by the effects of nuclear waste, posits, "Perhaps the principles were always wrong. Perhaps it is true that social justice, economic justice, equality, community, an end to the master and slave, the withering away of the state: These are desirable but not realizable on the earth." (page 183) While we should not quote a fictional character as if she speaks for the author—especially since Kushner takes Leo Bersani to task for doing so—one wonders if this is not Kushner's belief, but his fear.

Kushner firmly believes in the importance of theory in creating social change; however, he knows that even when there is a theory, "a big idea" as he calls it (page 67), a movement can still fail to fully achieve it. Theory alone is not enough. Most political rhetoric in the United States explains the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc as proof that the theory of communism is "wrong." Kushner, on the other hand, sees the theory as worthy and looks to the more complex issues of human nature for an explanation. Rather than blaming the very idea of communism, he contends that perhaps it was the endless power struggles of the leadership, fear, lack of compassion, and greed that destroyed the nation.

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Surviving as a Community in the Age of AIDS

In the Shadow of the Epidemic: Being HIV-Negative in the Age of AIDS
by Walt Odets.

Durham NC: Duke University Press
1995. 321 pp.
\$45.95 cloth. ISBN: 0-8223-1626-9.
\$14.95 paper. ISBN: 0-8223-1638-2.

HIV-Negative: How the Uninfected Are Affected by AIDS
by William I. Johnston.

New York and London: Plenum Press
1995. 332 pp.
\$24.95 Cloth. ISBN: 0-306-44947-1
\$14.95 paper. ISBN: 0-306-44951-X.

Review by Joseph Interrante.

In 1989, the marketing of low-dosage AZT as the first anti-retroviral treatment for so-called "asymptomatic" HIV infection led to predictions that HIV disease (no longer AIDS) would soon become a "chronic" manageable illness. In retrospect (and even at the time), such predictions were terribly premature. They reflected more about our despair over the epidemic and our desperate need to find some hope to weigh against the steady progression of death. The news since that time, culminating in the Berlin AIDS conference in 1993, has forced a new realism. "Early intervention" treatment against HIV infection can delay progression to AIDS, but whether it increases actual longevity is unclear. More important, HIV/AIDS remains a terminal illness. We are a long way from making it a chronic illness, and even further from finding either a cure or a vaccine.

The development of the "early intervention" model did have one other, longer-lasting effect. With the emergence of treatments directed against HIV infection specifically, knowing one's "HIV status" acquired a meaning it previously did not have. More than anything else, this development eroded the discursive hostility against testing which up to that time existed in many if not most large gay communities. (San Francisco, where the community was much more supportive of testing in the 1980s, was an exception to this hostility.) Testing became a publicly supported (even encouraged) act within gay communities. More men came to know themselves as "HIV-positive" or "HIV-negative".

Johnston and Odets would probably argue that this determining role played by treatments reflected what they see as gay communities' overidentification with the needs of the HIV-positive. Published within a few months of each other, these two books offer the first attempts to explore (and in some senses to define) the experiences of uninfected gay men fifteen years into the AIDS epidemic in metropolitan areas. For them, the identification of gay community institutions and discourse with the needs of HIV-positive men has erected a wall of silence around

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Foreword by
Eric E. Rofes

the experiences of HIV-negative men, a silence which contributes to what Odets calls a "psychological epidemic" among HIV-negative men.

What gives exploration of this epidemic a particular urgency is the evidence of a "second wave" of HIV infections among gay men. Since 1990/1991, this second wave has been described in general as a problem of "relapse" to unsafe behavior. The term actually clusters several different patterns of behavior—not only sporadic instances of risky behavior by men who have for the most part attempted to practice safer sex, but also consistently risky behavior by some men and risky behavior of both sorts by younger men in particular. Despite the looseness of the term, the "discovery" of relapse proved important in two respects. It provided a tool for countering the marginalization of gay men (as opposed to "men who have sex with men") in mainstream coverage of the epidemic and in prevention funding. And it provided a space within which to "justifiably" focus on the experiences of HIV-negative men. Within a community overidentified (these authors would suggest) with the needs of HIV-positive men, the needs of HIV-negative men could be justified in terms of HIV prevention.

It is revealing that many reviews of these books in non-gay-specific publications have viewed them in exactly these terms. Without denying their importance in this area—or the attention devoted by these authors to AIDS education—these books have a larger purpose. AIDS is an "event" which has fundamentally redefined the lives of gay men and the gay (male) community. Even if we could still believe that HIV/AIDS would be cured in our lifetimes, life after AIDS would not and could not be a simple return to life before the epidemic. But AIDS is not a temporary event. It has recreated the gay male community into one of (what Odets calls) "possible survivors and presumed nonsurvivors." Viewing AIDS as temporary—as an "interruption"—has allowed us to ignore this fundamental reconfiguration of community relationships, and thus to ignore the impact which the epidemic has had on the lives of uninfected gay men as well as infected men.

HIV-Negative: How the Uninfected are Affected by AIDS is based upon interviews with 45 HIV-negative men and contains extended testimonies by 13 men. Interspersed throughout these first-person narratives, Johnston highlights common issues and concerns. Issues include anxieties surrounding the test, mixed reactions to testing HIV-negative, developing intimacy, taking sexual risks, and looking to the future. The book itself grew out of Johnston's experience as a member and peer facilitator of the Boston HIV-Negative Support Group. It attempts to translate the experience of that group into a format accessible to HIV-negative men who do not have access to a group in their communities. Appendices offer guidelines for starting support groups and an outline of topics for discussion, as well as a list of resources.

Johnston suggests that learning to speak openly about one's experiences as uninfected is another kind of "coming out" process. The book reads very much like those early anthologies by Karla Jay and Allen Young and others published in the late 1970s. Johnston is for the most part content to let the voices speak for themselves. His chapters frequently highlight the diverse responses and reactions which these men have had to AIDS as men who learn they are uninfected. Through this diversity runs a common struggle

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What's Possible? Sexual Decision-making and the AIDS Epidemic

Reviving the Tribe: Regenerating Gay Men's Sexuality and Culture in the Ongoing Epidemic. by Eric Rofes

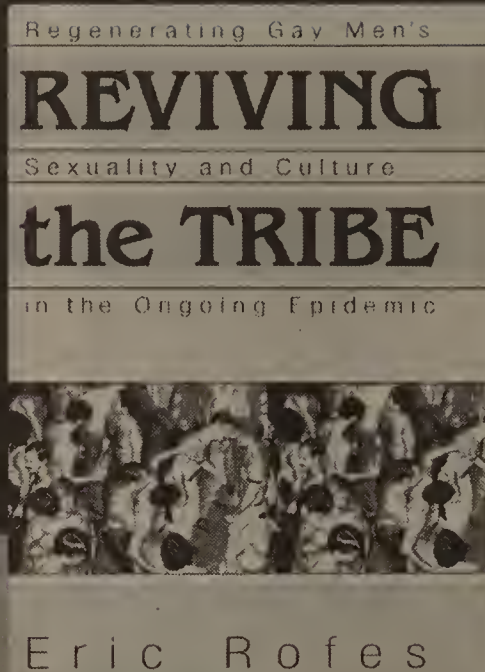
The Harrington Press
1995, 290 pp.

Review by Brian Byrnes

The time is apparently right for authors to name, in a popularized and non-academic way, the psychological, emotional and spiritual pain that many uninfected gay men have experienced as a result of the AIDS epidemic. This discussion is not intended to marginalize those of us who are positive; it is merely an attempt to address some of the issues that are unique to those who are thus far surviving the epidemic and remain at risk for infection. One hopes that by talking about the trauma of AIDS, gay men will confront more easily the complex factors that affect their ability to remain uninfected while maintaining sexually active lives. But, can gay men recover from a crisis which is ongoing; and how do we continue to live in a state of emergency and resistance toward AIDS while accepting that AIDS is here for the long haul? After a decade and a half, how do those of us who are surviving AIDS make sense of the perpetual ebb and flow of paralyzing anxiety; the unbearable grief; the lost communities, friends and lovers; and the forfeiture of sexual liberation and unbridled sexual exploration? And how do AIDS prevention efforts integrate all of these issues into programs that help men enhance their ability and desire to survive the epidemic?

Recently, a number of books dealing with these subjects have come out, including William Johnston's *HIV Negative: How the Uninfected are Affected by AIDS*, and Walt Odets' *In the Shadow of the Epidemic: Being HIV-Negative in the Age of AIDS*. Now, long-time gay community organizer and AIDS activist, Eric Rofes, has rounded out a trilogy on the topic in a new book entitled, *Reviving the Tribe: Regenerating Gay Men's Sexuality and Culture in the Ongoing Epidemic*, an ambitious exploration of the hard issues facing gay men and HIV prevention programs. Often harkening back to his experience of organizing "the community" during the good ole' days of gay liberation, Mr. Rofes' contribution is unique for the continuity it provides with the political movements of the late 1970s, before the derailment that occurred in the early 1980s as a result of AIDS.

Divided into three sections: Restoring Mental Health; Reclaiming Sexuality; and Regenerating Community and an epilogue, *Reviving the Tribe* critically analyzes the psychological, sexual and communal factors that contribute to the continuing AIDS epidemic among gay men. The book is not intended to be a recipe for ending the epidemic; rather it provides a wrenching analysis of the complexities of sexual decision-making in the context of the epidemic, a critique of HIV



prevention efforts among gay men, and then offers a rationale and recommendations for renewed gay community organizing efforts.

Mr. Rofes writes dramatically, colorfully and with a sense of urgency to every sentence. After only a few pages, the reader knows that he is in for an overwritten narrative that freely weaves in and out of autobiographical reflection, social commentary, comparative history, prevention theory, and psychological analysis. This is not a criticism, per se, because, in fact, there are sections of *Reviving the Tribe* that succinctly and refreshingly articulate new insights and emphatically call for new directions which are compelling. However, there is little crescendo in the book as it maintains a kind of high-pitched scream throughout. Every sentence sounds like a

main point, and because of that, one has to work to distinguish the essential from the peripheral. But the good stuff is worth waiting for and, once you get to it, it provides a pleasant relief from the unbearable personal accounts of depression and suffering, and the all too frequent references to the Holocaust, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder literature.

The Meaning of Sex

"Reclaiming Sexuality" (section II) is the strongest section of the book, and, but for a few important exceptions, it is a valuable read for anyone who thinks about HIV prevention efforts among gay men. While Rofes does not avoid the pitfall of jumping on the prevention-bashing bandwagon (popularized in recent years by Odets), he does outline a useful strategy for the future that "aims to support each man in assuming increased authority for his erotic activities and becoming the locus of authority for sexual risk management." (p. 203) He distinguishes "risk management," a more realistic and value-free characterization of what gay men face in their sexual lives, from the more popular "risk reduction," thereby moving beyond the usual dialogue that pits "risk reduction" against "risk elimination." He also challenges the naive expectation that gay men can or should be (or for that matter, ever were) "100 percent safe" or that we can halt the epidemic by our own volition in the absence of a preventive vaccine. He then forces the reader to squirm with discomfort while he calculates the number of new infections per year, thirty or forty years from now, that will constitute successful HIV prevention. Rofes brings our expectation that behavioral modification could alone end the epidemic back into the realm of what is actually achievable—posing one of the most painful and daunting challenges faced by gay community members and leaders, HIV prevention providers and funding agencies alike. Like others writing about these issues (in addition to Odets and Johnston, Chris Bull and John Gallagher, Michael Warner and Mark Schoofs, and Gabriel Rotello and Michelangelo Signorile), Rofes throws into question many of the assumptions we make about the homogeneity of gay male values. Here he points out how difficult it is for many of us to accept "a moral system which privileges pleasure, unfettered abandon, or specific modes of semen transfer over longevity of life."

Educators who impose either their own or their agency's black and white edicts for survival present perhaps the most serious threat to effective prevention efforts. Rofes writes, "For those who value life above all else, it may be impossible to resist pathologizing men who maintain different priorities in the middle of an epidemic." When we are content only to teach gay men how to behave and what to believe, we cease to empower them, and thereby probably decrease their ability and desire to avoid infection. It may seem paradoxical to some, but AIDS educators will best serve gay men if they allow them to articulate their own values; trust that gay men can understand and interpret morally neutral and scientifically detailed information about transmission and sexual behaviors; and create venues for them to dialogue about the meaning of sex in their lives. By liberating gay men from the directives and prescribed moral standards of traditional public health models of education, HIV prevention specialists can contribute to the restoration of a kind of individual and communal health that will help men manage their risks more successfully.

Liberation Education

Following on Odets, Rofes reminds his readers that there are, in fact, positive reasons for men to have unsafe sex: for emotional satisfaction, comfort, and pleasure. To admit that men may make informed

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gripping, terrible tribute to both parents: an anguished cry to the mother he has never known and an act of equal parts of love and vengeance towards the father whose sins include not only brutality and inconstancy, but also a strength and passion that the author begrudgingly admires and envies. But Dad's least forgivable offense turns out to be his inability to understand the alien experience of either the gay man or the artist his son becomes.

Peck begins the section where we all start from, with the mother's body, and his indignation that it has been taken from him. In a recognition of the special place of mothers in the genesis of the gay male sensibility, this primal loss means that "nothing as simple, as discrete as the body of another woman can take her place." What he has been given in return is the gift of language, which he uses as a weapon against his father, as well as a life raft. There is genuine love, but mingled with it is the conviction that one's father is a force against which vigilance and self-defense are always necessary. The oldest and most enduring enemies are one's parents, but the problem is that we also owe them everything. Set over against this difficult wisdom are the twin myths of childhood, "that it's the world that's out to get you, and that, when it doesn't, it's because you've somehow managed to overcome it yourself." This is a grim but astringent philosophy for so young an author.

The middle section is important to the book's main plot because, in fully conveying both the anger and the love Peck feels for his parents, it authenticates the hard moral he seems to draw in the other story about the consolation as well as the torment of coupling. The details of Hank and Bea's particular marital train wreck are rather commonplace: his emotional aloofness and unavailability lead to absence and infidelity, her sexual boredom and loneliness to more infidelity and the illusory solution of children, and all of it is enveloped in a haze of alcohol and drugs, and a mutual sense of being "trapped." What makes Peck's treatment particularly gripping, however, is a lyrically intense language that is sometimes almost Dantesque. He also conveys with equal power and conviction the genuine tenderness and passion of the couple's love when it is new. The persuasiveness with which this part of the story is told gives a terrible poignancy to the disintegration with which it is juxtaposed. And their love abides, though at times it seems like a form of damnation. The time comes, as Peck puts it, for them to leave one another, but somehow, "uncontrollably, they still loved each other, and their love would not set them free."

The surprise is that at the book's searing conclusion, the love with which Hank and Bea have tortured one another becomes the means to a kind of redemption. In their final scene together, "a chance which does redeem all sorrows," Peck's writing is at its best. Beatrice observes every faded feature of Henry's aged face: "This man, this husband, . . . whose head she was pulling slowly toward hers, . . . was still a stranger. Freed, finally, of the burden of knowing him, of finishing him, like a book or a journey is finished, she loved him, and she made love to him." With both style and tact, Peck draws the curtain around their last lovemaking. This respectful silence is eloquent, and seems to me finally to locate the author's sympathies with the unfortunate pair, and with all those who go on believing, all the evidence to the contrary notwithstanding, that love can save us.

This book embodies a recent trend in gay art towards appropriating a special role for us as exiles from the American Family, with a special mission to tell the unpleasant truth about marriage as the defining institution of heterosexuality. Perhaps appropriately, gay people are almost invisible here, or at least as inconspicuous as Alfred Hitchcock in his trademark cameo walk-ons. Blink and you will miss the youthful Henry's ambiguous interactions with his hunky co-worker "the Miller boy," and in only one passage do we learn that son John is gay. But Peck is much too complex an artist simply to trash marriage. And by leaving us with a vision of the kind of terrible transcendence that Beatrice and Henry finally achieve, he perhaps suggests the necessity of learning all we can, even from the tortured models that the straight world has given us, about what it means to share a life with another person. Expect to fail, but don't stop trying to hold onto someone. You'll probably be miserable, but the alternative is not much better.

For some time a major enterprise of gay writing has been the creation of a language that had scarcely existed in literature for erotic experience. But having reclaimed and mapped the terrain of our erotic lives, some of our most talented writers are now grappling with the perception that there is more to life than the erotic, and the new frontier of gay fiction turns out to be —*quelle surprise!*— the heterosexual couple. The easy part is trashing it; much harder are understanding and empathy. Peck triumphantly manages all three.

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Fascinated with nearby "sultry girls" and "hot, Dionysian laughter" she senses her grandmother's disapproval:

as if she knew that I was
already running
with the wrong crowd
as if she could see me leaning
against a polished banister,
staring
at a woman and letting her stare
at me

When it comes to the women in her life, Becker takes pleasure in writing about the full enjoyment of the moment, even though the promise falls through. "We thought of Each Other as Food," celebrates two women together. So far, love is always in the past tense. Still there has been fun and connection along the way.

We thought of each other as fiction
and wrote our story with kisses
our characters spoke and revised their opinions,
each night they broke free from convention
We thought of each other as Ferris wheel and fairground
on the turning axes of our bodies

Becker enjoys a departure from free verse in "Villanelle for a Lesbian Mom." The chosen formality suits the situation, that strange intense mixture of sexual intimacy with someone's brand new-to-you body chemistry. The speaker is tender; the tone is slightly hushed.

It wasn't love but chance and rather sweet —
your newly weaned son asleep in his crib, your breasts too tender
to be touched. And touch itself, too early, indiscreet.

With a skillful blend of vivid imagery and delicate detail, Becker carves slice of life scenes in the little Italian town known for its exquisite marble. "In Pietrasanta" resounds with the timbre of "tr otobikes and hard laughter at Bar Nella."

In this artist's mecca two women find themselves in bitter standoff:

For months, I'd wanted one thing: I wanted you to go
painting with me, in a field, or an olive grove.
I wanted us to be together with our paper and brushes,
creating something at the same time.
The night before I left for the States, you said
OK, come on, and in the dark you led me
to the field behind the Romanesque Church. There,
we spread out our colors, all black, and began.

All-American Girl is evocative. With searing honesty she grasps hold of desire, loneliness, anguish. This journey slaps at the edges of erupting turbulent waters, adumbrated by pain.

In her last poem, "The Roast Chicken," a woman prepares the ritual family dinner for herself alone. Her flight from family saved her life; her sister got out another way.

Becker is alive and gives us a promissory note that she is ready to lift anchor and head off again to deeper waters: "your best chances are the ones you take."

Clare Coss is the editor of *The Arc of Love, An Anthology of Lesbian Love Poems*, Scribner 1996. Her book, *Lillian Wald: Progressive Activist*, The Feminist Press, includes her play, "Lillian Wald At Home on Henry Street." Playwright and psychotherapist, she lives and works in New York City.

liberationist politics and reinvents that group in the process. ACT UPs across the country used direct action and other political strategies to fight AIDS. Contrary to Sullivan's work of fiction, censorship, the imposition of speech codes, popularizing the label "queer" and outing were not on ACT UP's national agenda. Local groups created strategies particular to the situations they faced. Some members of ACT UP saw the fight against AIDS in the context of gay liberation; others did not.

Sullivan refuses serious discussion of many gay liberationist political engagements, including efforts to change the curricula in the public schools so that homosexuality is taught as healthy and positive, advocacy for national health insurance as one step in fighting the AIDS crisis, and participation in civil disobedience actions against the 1986 Supreme Court anti-gay sodomy ruling. Gay liberationists are a varied lot, not as easily boxed in, belittled, and shunted aside as Sullivan would like.

Heterosexual Primacy

After dismissing these four politics of homosexuality, Sullivan offers his own — classic liberalism, a neutral state which grants full public equality to all people, homosexuals included, period. Sullivan views equal access to the military and to marriage as the most important practical elements of his proposal. In a period when "moderation" is seen as a virtue and "extremism," no matter its goals, is disdained, Sullivan seeks to gain credibility when he repudiates the prohibitionists and, more emphatically, the liberationists. But what kind of a world is Sullivan proposing? Straight people can rest assured, his proposal "require[s] no change in heterosexual behavior and no sacrifice from heterosexuals." (p.185) Sullivan offers a new and improved version of heterosexual supremacy, a perfect solution given his desire that homosexuality be understood "to complement...the central male-female order," and not "deny heterosexual primacy..." (p.47)

Confusion arises when Sullivan exclaims that "[i]f nothing else were done at all, and gay marriage were legalized, ninety percent of the political work necessary to achieve gay and lesbian equality would have been achieved." (p.185) What kinds of mental contortions allow Sullivan to envision gay and lesbian "equality" in a context of "heterosexual primacy?" And what does this 'equality' mean for queer youth who are three times more likely than straight youth to commit suicide, not because they can't get married or join the army, but because they are overcome by their families' and society's views of them as abnormal and perverted. How will legalizing homosexual marriage lessen the barriers lesbians and gay men face in getting jobs, housing, and health care? How will it reduce the rising incidence and increasing severity of queer bashings? Sullivan never addresses what lesbians and gay men should do in the face of persistent "private" bigotry and discrimination from prohibitionists (and, I would argue, from conservative and even liberal forces.) That is because he rejects a critical component of gay and lesbian inequality and oppression: the institutionalization of heterosexuality as the norm.

Sullivan's silence about the extreme discrimination and violence that women and African Americans still face, despite having achieved public equality, should come as no surprise. This is consonant with the conservative view that laws seeking to rectify discrimination against particular groups infringe on the "freedoms" of the previously privileged. Understanding the impact of that view on various queer communities is clearly beyond Sullivan's reach. The particular experiences of lesbians and queers of color don't even get mentioned.

Sullivan's choice to use "homosexual," a term spurned by lesbians and gay men of all stripes almost two decades ago, suggests his belief that self-definition is unimportant and that dominant societal definitions are somehow, as he claims, "neutral." Who is "oppressed" by the "he or she" answer to the universal male pronoun? Isn't it right and necessary to choose words which "jar" people into critical thinking? I am not nitpicking. Sullivan's choices about language are mirrored in the analysis throughout his book, all of which reveal his outright endorsement of the status quo where (white) men and heterosexuals determine the terms of the debate, and much more.

Sullivan wrote that this was a book about how society should deal with homosexuals. But it's also a book about how homosexuals should be and what "we" should demand of society. Sullivan is content to leave gender norms intact. Conveniently overlooking the realities of domestic violence, incest, and divorce, Sullivan favors the privileging of marriage over other expressions of love and lust since married people "make a deeper commitment to one another and to society." (p.182) He believes that homosexuality should be addressed in the public schools, but "with far less emphasis" than heterosexuality. (p.172) He has no qualms about the state's right to pass sodomy laws, as long as they apply equally to heterosexuals and homosexuals. (p.171)

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They responded with detachment, separated from themselves. It took months of careful cultivation to get them to engage in the repartee—to have them voluntarily hook their legs around my back, to have them not pull away as I slide my hand up and under the little dresses, curling my fingers into their underpants. There was one who was reaching for me within two weeks. She would lower my zipper as we sped along the interstates, putting her mouth over me—little snake charmer. I soon left her by the side of the road with the sick and frightening feeling of having created a monster, worried for the life of the unsuspecting truck driver who would pick up the hitchhiking and precocious nymph. Cunnus Daboli.

The assured voice, the near-pornographic detail, the taunt and the revel of the tone all force us into a state of inclusion and retreat. The same voice that abhorred the intimacy of rimming now prizes his own ability to coax and trick "intimacy" from young girls. What do we do with this passage? How does Homes want us to react? Is this man simply a monster condemned or understood? And what does "understood" mean for Homes who has set up a narrative where she has little, intrusive, authorial voice? Does Homes have the narrator present Alice as the sexual aggressor to alert us to the phantasmic character of the narration or does she have some other agenda? What do we make of the narrator's past history with his mother that, while upsetting, feels a little too close to a pat psychological explanation for his desires and behaviors. Homes brings us closer and closer to this invented world and some readers will choose to follow her, with trepidation, but without stopping. But where do we end up? What do we learn? Does this horrific wonderland—this distorting hall of mirrors in a house of horrors—move us to a new place of thinking or feeling?

"Consider everything, only don't cry."

A.M. Homes—and *The End of Alice*—is not out to simply titillate us. As with Dennis Cooper, or Laclos, for that matter, it is a highly moral work that makes its points by portraying (what many see) as immoral behavior. But in the end the book itself lacks the obsession of its content, the power of its images. The narrator's voice is compelling, but we are never brought into his world completely enough to frighten ourselves—it lacks the terror and pity, the shock of recognition, that would allow us to see ourselves in him. By the time the shocking revelations (the Red Queen's most famous command is clearly the operative action here) come in the final chapter we have not been given enough sustained immersion into this new, topsy-tervy world to either make sense of it or treat it with complete revulsion. It is unclear which of these goals Homes might be aiming for—either would do—but the fact remains that *The End of Alice* is not the completely transportive experience it has to be to really work: we are still on our side of the looking glass, or only peering over the edge of the rabbit hole.

The Lewis Carroll epigraph that begins *The End of Alice* is from neither Alice in Wonderland nor Through the Looking Glass but from a letter the mathematician wrote to an academic friend who posed the question: Which is better? a clock that doesn't work at all, or one that is always running a minute fast. The answer, of course, is the one that is right twice a day, and you will know at what moment it is correct because of its stillness. A.M. Homes—and *The End of Alice*—posits that when examining the complexity and overwhelming confusion of human sexuality and violence, it is better to stop running ahead and to contemplate the matter in stillness. For all of its frantic sexual intrigue and its descriptions of violence *The End of Alice* wants us to stand back and—in stillness—think about what we know, what we think we know, what we experience and how we feel. The problem with the book however is that while it wants us to weigh and evaluate our pre-set notions on a whole range of topics, it does not push us enough to really do this: our feelings just aren't engaged enough to be able to work this material through with our hearts as well as our heads. Towards the end of Through the Looking Glass Alice exclaims in an overwrought emotional state "Consider everything, only don't cry!"

If only A.M. Homes had not listened so well to that little girl who had fallen into a frightening, perplexing world she did not understand, but pursued, more completely, the artist's mandate that great literature moves us in both thought and feeling.

Michael Bronski is the author of *Culture Clash* and the just published, *Flash Point: Best Gay Male Sexual Writing*. His book, *Taking Liberties: Gay Male Essays on Culture, Politics and Sex* will be out in May, and his book, *Lesbian and Gay Culture* is forthcoming from Chelsea House.

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If human frailty did in the "big idea" of the Soviet Union, what hope is there for the United States? In "Copious, Gigantic, and Sane," his address to the 1993 March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, Kushner marvels at the resilience of the Left. "I don't know what power it is in human beings that keeps us going against indescribable forces of destruction. ...By what means of what magic do people transform bitter centuries of enslavement and murder into Beauty and Grace?" (pages 51-52) Kushner's attitude, then, can be described as realistically pessimistic about the present, but still joyfully optimistic about our ability to persevere and transform the future.

It is too easy to compare Tony Kushner to Oscar Wilde. Like Kushner, Wilde was best known as a playwright and yet he wrote often and well in other forms (including essays and poems). Wilde embraced pretentiousness a century before Kushner did. While Kushner has developed his politics earlier and more fully than Wilde did, there too they are very similar. Kushner says of Wilde, "Oscar's socialism is an exaltation of the individual, of the individual's immense capacities for beauty and for pleasure." (page 31) Tony's politics are enlightened by a century of progressive politics, and yet he still exalts the individual, beauty and pleasure, and, as he asks about Wilde, "What could be more gay?"

Christopher J. Hogan is a writer who lives in Boston. He writes regularly for *Drummer* and *The Guide* and has an essay in the forthcoming book, *Taking Liberties: Gay Male Essays on Culture, Politics and Sex*, edited by Michael Bronski.

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to define what it means to be HIV-negative and to develop an "HIV-negative identity."

In *the Shadow of the Epidemic* attempts to delineate the contours and parameters of that identity and experience in more systematic terms. Odets describes and interprets a cluster of symptoms of what he calls the "psychological epidemic" among HIV-negative gay men: depression, mania, anxiety, hypochondria, sexual dysfunction, and avoidance of intimacy. For Odets, being HIV-negative is a state of being, a condition shaped by isolation and disenfranchisement within a gay community focused on AIDS and the needs of those living with HIV. At the heart of that condition is an experience of repeated and relentless loss both personal and collective. While both infected and uninfected men experience such loss, for uninfected men such loss is shaped by the profound effects of survivor guilt. Yet the focus in gay communities on the needs of men with HIV/AIDS, Odets argues, allows no room for the articulation and exploration of survivor guilt—of what it means to be gay and HIV-negative. Collective denial thus encourages individual denial and repression by HIV-negative men of their feelings and experiences. And this denial and repression manifests itself in the symptoms of the psychological epidemic.

For Odets the clinical psychologist, the effects of this psychological epidemic are both individual and collective. Most obviously, Odets sees it contributing to unsafe behavior. It also encourages individual and collective isolation of gay men from one another. Odets sees this institutionalized isolation in the compulsive use of j/o clubs, phone sex lines, and 12-Step programs. It is not that these activities cannot be valuable and positive (no pun intended) in themselves. Rather, j/o clubs become problematic when they become gay men's exclusive social/sexual outlets. 12-Step programs become problematic when they are used as an implicit form of penance. When this occurs, these activities can end up supporting emotional isolation, rather than enabling gay men to connect with one another.

Ultimately (and in a way which subsumes these other effects), this psychological epidemic and the denial of this epidemic has prevented HIV-negative men from exploring what it means for them to survive AIDS, and thus to begin to re-envision a community which must accommodate HIV/AIDS into the foreseeable future. This does NOT mean the vision of community can or will be solely the creation of men who are uninfected. Rather, Odets and Johnston would both argue, I think, that such a discussion about the meanings of survival has been absent from community discourse because it would seem to abandon (and be seen as abandoning) men with HIV/AIDS. This is only true, I think, if you conflate individual explorations about survival with the collective discourse about survival as a community. The latter clearly involves both negative and positive men. However, the community's overidentification with AIDS (what Odets calls the "AIDSification of homosexual-

[T]he focus in gay communities on the needs of men with HIV/AIDS, Odets argues, allows no room for the articulation and exploration of survivor guilt...

ity), and the defining of AIDS issues as the experience of the infected, has kept this community dialogue a monologue about living with HIV.

One of Odets's sharpest indictments is directed at HIV prevention campaigns which, he argues, have consistently failed to distinguish clearly between the uninfected and infected and thus contribute powerfully to this denial of HIV-negative experience. Because of this, these campaigns have been unable to deal with the many different reasons why men who are uninfected may place themselves at risk. Undifferentiated exhortations to "use a condom every time" also fail to allow for reasoned negotiations among partners who are both uninfected. Odets argues for an incorporation of psychological understandings of risk behavior into HIV prevention work, as well as for a clinical approach to providing prevention education.


While I think Odets is right, that many prevention campaigns continue to lack complexity or specificity in their messages, he also underestimates the extent to which this issue has been evolving among gay AIDS educators. Odets draws all of his evidence from broad community "norm-building" campaigns and from campaigns in large coastal metropolitan areas. In addition to these marketing campaigns, many education programs have also for some time used a clinically oriented strategy of small groups meeting for a specified number of weeks. While these groups may not have been designed specifically for HIV-negative men, the strategy has been and is being adapted to their needs. It's also true that some norm-building campaigns for gay men have never been as decisively influenced by marketing principles as his primary example, the San Francisco AIDS Foundation. Many programs had always argued that safety was situational, that is, two men who were HIV-negative who did not use condoms were not being unsafe. However, one of the problems that such messages encountered (and Johnston raises this issue in his book) was a distrust of the accuracy of negative test results and a distrust of partner honesty. This question of honesty—which existed long before AIDS—goes to the heart of issues about relations among gay men.

In *the Shadow of the Epidemic* especially is an important book, particularly for the existential issues which it poses for our community. Yet there are some questions or issues we need to raise about his argument as part of that discussion about the future. Odets suggests that the psychological epidemic he describes is characteristic primarily of metropolitan communities where a plurality or significant portion of gay men are HIV-infected. Actually, much of what he describes applies to communities where the incidence may not be so high. Having worked and lived in smaller communities in the midwest and south, I know that HIV-negative men are experiencing many of the same issues.

On the other hand, the particular dynamics of survivor guilt which he describes may be bound by class and culture. For Odets, a particular pattern of homosexual personality development, of "coming out" as gay, characterized by separation from biological family and (temporary) alienation from self, creates a predisposition for guilt and anxiety which is exacerbated by AIDS-related survivor guilt. At the same time, an instrumental attitude toward the future also creates a predisposition toward denial of mortality and a valorization of longevity as an end in itself. But what about gay men for whom coming out does not automatically mean separation from biological kin, or who are not socialized to expect a future of endless possibility? To recognize that AIDS, loss, and survivor guilt are experienced differently does not deny the validity of any particular experience, but simply highlights how diverse our existential dialogue as a community will truly have to be.

There is also a tension in Odets' work around the importance of longevity as a value. Odets makes a strong argument against the idea that biological survival outweighs all other considerations, and for consideration of "other kinds of survival" which incorporate values about the quality of one's life. But at some fundamental level, longevity is a value. Surely, we must agree that not being infected is better than being infected. (This does not mean that HIV-negative men are better or worse than positive men, or that their quality of life is automatically better or worse.) And that is so because the absence of infection (presumed survival) carries possibilities, a potential open-endedness to life, that being infected (presumed nonsurvival) does not. Tremendous pain and guilt surrounds this simple fact, but we need to move beyond that pain and guilt if our

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Paradoxically, in the last pages of *Virtually Normal*, Sullivan in effect makes an argument for gay liberation and against settling for mere public equality. Leaving the depraved homo aside for a moment, Sullivan extols gay relationships for being more sexually expressive and mutually nurturing, less isolating and restrictive, than heterosexual relationships. Never mind the fact that his first two hundred pages belie these sentiments; Sullivan's last minute claims beg the question, why fight for marriage, for mere equality into heterosexual society, if heterosexuals have so much to learn from homosexuals?

Debbie Gould is an activist living in Chicago. She was a long-time member of ACT UP/Chicago and currently does work around AIDS in prisons and US political prisoners.

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dialogue as a community about our future is to have any depth of meaning.

I mentioned earlier that Johnston's book reminded me of earlier "coming out" anthologies. The enterprise of defining and articulating an HIV-negative identity reminds me more of the men's movement, particularly of the struggle to define an anti-sexist male identity. I say this not to disparage either effort, for both are important and valuable, but to suggest that constructing an identity (and politics?) around being HIV-negative is filled with similar ambiguities and possible pitfalls. To the extent that HIV-positive men have an identity, it is basically oppositional in character (something the publishers of *Diseased Pariah News* understand quite well). But what is the opposition against which an HIV-negative identity (much less a concept of "Negative Pride") would be formed? Odets and Johnston would probably say disenfranchisement within the community. But who perpetuates such disenfranchisement? AIDS organizations? HIV-positive men? All of us? It's one thing to explore and discuss without guilt or denial the experience of living uninfected, an important undertaking for uninfected men individually and for the community as a whole. It's quite another to suggest that an identity and a politics be developed out of that (necessary) exploration.

Odets is aware of some of these pitfalls, as when he highlights the implicit homophobia contained in the argument made by some gay men that HIV-positive men must limit their sexuality (be more "responsible") to protect HIV-negative men. I would suggest that the argument is not only homophobic, it is also masculinist in that it makes HIV-positive men into moral guardians, a role similar to that delegated to women in moral purity campaigns. But Odets comes close to an opposite, but equally pernicious, stereotype when he suggests that HIV-positive men are more in touch with spiritual values and with "being in the world." This comes dangerously close to making HIV-positive men the teachers of inner values. Neither stereotype is really helpful.

Finally, if the exploration of HIV-negative experience is ultimately about survival, about the accommodation of AIDS, and about our community's future, then this collective discussion will eventually include not only uninfected men from all backgrounds, and the infected as well as the uninfected, but lesbians as well as gay men. Let us not forget that lesbians also experience AIDS and also experience it as survivors and nonsurvivors. Let us also recognize that breast cancer carries its own challenges to sexuality and intimacy. This is not knee-jerk political correctness. One of the most illuminating conversations I have had about AIDS and sexuality was with a lesbian whose lover had a mastectomy as a result of breast cancer. It hurts to talk about these things. It makes us very vulnerable. But we can learn a lot from one another.

Joseph Interrante is an HIV-positive gay man who has done AIDS work in Boston MA, Cleveland OH, and Nashville TN.

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decisions to engage in behaviors that carry risk for infection with them has been anathema for many of us. How do we talk about reasoned risk-taking in ways that are supportive and respectful? That means acknowledging the compelling reasons why a man might allow himself to get fucked without a condom or understand why he can't fathom never swallowing semen again. Rofes captures something crucial when he calls for us to give up our "professional" AIDS educator identity in favor of one that allows us to assist men to inquire, reflect and problem-solve around issues of sexual health.

Prevention as the facilitation of individual decision-making is certainly a worthwhile goal. However, Mr. Rofes is not the first to suggest it, and he is quite wrong in his criticism that it does not currently occur in HIV prevention efforts. Mr. Rofes should know that more than just the one or two programs he cites in his book have integrated the writings of Brazilian social critic Paulo Freire into their prevention efforts, albeit many of them by osmosis rather than design. Certainly, previous efforts at liberation education may have been compromised by inexperience as educators struggled to come to terms with what does and doesn't work in AIDS prevention. But in recent years, many prevention providers and even funders, have consciously integrated Dr. Freire's philosophies into their programs. In Massachusetts, for example, liberation education has been a guiding principle for programs targeting people in the sex industry, men in public sex environments, and gay men in general—offering events where gay men, both individually and collectively, can work toward "linking reflection with action." In other parts of the country, programs like the STOP AIDS Project in San Francisco, The Life Guard Project and Sex Essentials in Los Angeles, and Slipping and Sliding in Dallas, all have as their touchstones interactive discussion groups where men engage in a process of "making and remaking their lives" without being told how to feel and how to live by authoritarian AIDS educators.

Failed Analogies

I have one last major criticism of *Reviving the Tribe* that I absolutely must mention. It remains completely beyond me how one can write about AIDS and gay men and conjure up images of genocide and mass annihilation as Rofes does in the first, and to a lesser degree, third sections of his book. He writes of "witnessing extreme atrocities" which parallel those of Holocaust survivors, and of viewing "corpses piled up beyond our worst nightmares." Then, in attempting to prove the inadequacies of some psychological catch phrases to capture the experience of trauma for gay men in San Francisco and New York, Mr. Rofes writes: "Would [the term] 'cumulative grief' be used to describe the experiences of returning Vietnam Veterans who had witnessed countless and unrelenting incidents of terror and annihilation? Do clinicians discussing the way Nazi death camps impacted Holocaust survivors utilize terms like 'multiple loss?'" And then, rhetorically, "Are gay men overreacting when we make these comparisons?"

To make the comparison once, for the sake of a point, is perhaps acceptable. However, by beating the metaphor of AIDS as Holocaust into the ground, Rofes loses respect as a social critic. Frankly, I find such comparisons disrespectful, misleading and dis-

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tracting. Is not the scope and devastation of the pandemic enough to elicit its own horror? Is it necessary to tie the epidemic to the Holocaust, a formal policy of systematic extinction that involved enormous costs and labor to carry out, leading to the deaths of 12 million people within a mere two to three years? Unlike the Holocaust, the AIDS epidemic has generated an active, relentless resistance movement that has altered peoples' understanding of AIDS and shifted government policy toward the epidemic. But despite this tireless activity, there is no "post-AIDS" syndrome. AIDS will be, for many of us, a permanent feature of our lives. We have to confront that, despite our scientific knowledge, despite the mobilizations, the changes in policy, the public recognition of the crisis; the virus remains inscrutable—ending the epidemic depends on a (yet to be discovered) vaccine and a cure. Thus, it may be more worthwhile to look at the psychological toll of 15 years of activism that organized our anger against societal inaction and engendered a sense of hope, even for the cynical among us, but which could not produce the hoped for results.

Eric Rofes will likely be criticized for not being able to see outside of his own experience of AIDS as a white, middle class, educated gay man over 35 years of age. Personally, I don't have a problem with people writing about their experiences and for the communities they care about. He shouldn't have to apologize for that. However, he will probably also be criticized for not having given a better explanation of his involvement in the Shanti Project fiasco. His two-page account of his psychological state during this time feeds my cynicism more than my compassion, and begs a further explanation in some other, still to be written piece. The failure of the Shanti administration led to terrible consequences for their clients, e.g. loss of housing. That is more our concern than the personal state of Mr. Rofes at that time.

In short, *Reviving the Tribe* is a stimulating book for folks actively engaged in HIV prevention for gay men. Mr. Rofes adds his own unique layer of interpretation on the most current trends and debates in the field and will positively influence future dialogues about gay male prevention strategies into the next century. His captivating narrative is poignant and moving, though at times it borders on being obviously manipulative. *Reviving the Tribe* will hopefully inspire more effective prevention programming for gay men, and encourage a continuing dialogue about the effects of the epidemic on gay male life.

Brian Byrnes is the manger of Gay Male Education at the AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts.

... [his book] provides a wrenching analysis of the complexities of sexual decision-making in the context of the epidemic...

Marriage Must Not Eclipse Other Family Organizing

by Paula L. Ettelbrick

The lesbian and gay community's challenge to the mom, dad, and the kids notion of family is taking hold. Innumerable employers, both private and public, have extended employment benefits to our partners and our children. Dozens of courts have granted second parent adoptions to unmarried partners. Businesses have dropped traditional family relationships as the prerequisite for "family" discounts or special promotions. The media more frequently feature unmarried couples as one of many types of families. "Domestic partner" has become a colloquial term in our culture. And, the Hawaii Supreme Court has secured its place in history as the first court in the country (and the world) to rule that marriage laws excluding same-sex couples are unconstitutional.

These successes, in addition to the ever festering hostility towards unmarried women who decide to have children and general fears that straight couples are opting out of marriage, have prompted the predictable backlash. Bills have been introduced into a number of state legislatures banning lesbians and gay men from adoption and foster care. Conservative and rightwing legislators, hostile to court decisions granting equal recognition to unmarried families, threaten to overturn key victories in a number of states. Municipal domestic partnership policies have been overturned by courts. But most notably, palpable fear of the impact of Hawaii's marriage decision in other states has put marriage on the front burner of the Rightwing's attack on us. As a result, marriage holds a more prominent position in our own organizing and legislative strategies. No longer can we avoid discussing a "marriage strategy."

At the same time, there is danger in letting marriage strategies eclipse the need to protect all of our family victories. A single marriage victory is no more or less worthy of preservation than the dozens of other family gains we have made. Attempts to lionize marriage as the premier lesbian and gay family struggle trivializes other gains, censors other views, and is both a wasteful and unwise organizing premise.

Instead, we need to discuss how to incorporate, rather than abandon, our basic belief that marriage, when made a precondition to rights and benefits, unjustly and unacceptably discriminates against unmarried couples and parents. How do we prevent the slow slide into representing our families as nothing more than the lesbian/gay versions of the Cleaver Family, a representation that not only marginalizes most of us whose lives are messier, but also fails to tap into much needed grassroots energy? How can we defend against the marriage backlash without undercutting 15 years of important work that has established the principle that families exist beyond the confines of marriage? How, ultimately, do we want family to be defined, and how do we get from here to there?

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Equality through Marriage

by Jeff Nickels

How did it come to pass that the gay community is only now beginning to make marriage a major issue?

Gay people have avoided it basically for two reasons; to some it seemed difficult if not impossible to achieve, and to others it appeared not worth achieving, even if we could. Add to that conservative scare tactics about the ERA and other women's rights leading to gay marriage, and you've got a recipe for political purgatory.

Most gay people who oppose making marriage a priority do so because they believe it's an inherently flawed institution, in need of either total revision or total destruction. The latter option sounds like a very long wait. In the meantime, what about the lover whose partner dies, with the deceased's family living out its final denial of the relationship by refusing to let him keep even the cheapest of mementos? What of the children taken away, kicking and screaming, because there was no marriage license? The first option—revision of what constitutes the marriage relationship—has been taking place for a hundred years or more, at a greatly accelerated rate in the last thirty. Even without gay people, marriage is reforming itself. But if marriage for us were to happen, our own perspectives on parity and respect would give the institution just the kind of fresh perspective it needs, to the benefit of all.

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Marriage as Choice? Since When?

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next of kin relationships that don't assume biological or sexual relations, or enduring sexual relationships that don't lead to economic interdependency or economic interdependencies that involve neither kinship nor sex? Why can't we find ways to demand that the agencies of the state and our employers recognize that these forms of relation don't necessarily go together?

To make this process of disentangling the different kinds of needs more concrete I will use the example of my relationship with my sister. She has three children. I am the guardian for those children. In the event of divorce or catastrophe, I might become a co-parent rather than an aunt. Wouldn't it make sense for me to establish a household with my sister and her children that would have most of the economic benefits and subsidies, as well as the responsibilities, of marriage? Wouldn't it also make sense to separate some of the symbolic and material benefits, the ones that seemed to belong to my relationship with Nan? Nan would be my next of kin for most purposes, like medical consent and hospital visitation, but my health insurance and tax returns would be tied to my household with my sister. Why shouldn't I be permitted to adopt my sister's children? Does it make any real sense to tie two parent adoptions to sexual relationships?

The legacy of the heterosexual reproductive family, and its associated economic and property relations, shapes our own demands for partnership recognition. But our relationships and households don't actually match the model we're appealing to. We need to share resources and organize support for children differently. We have multiple ways of connecting and separating sexual relationships, living arrangements, and economic dependencies. We ignore this multiplicity in a headlong drive for inclusion in marriage, or in how we imagine domestic partnership arrangements, at our peril. Why can't we argue to separate these things?

Who's Ideological? Who's Pragmatic?

Sometimes, in the debate over the legal reform of marriage, advocates for gay marriage are represented as the pragmatists and those who argue against this goal are seen as the ideologues. But from another angle of vision, working out legal alternatives to marriage is the pragmatic path. Meeting our concrete and variable needs is pragmatic; support for marriage can be unrealistically ideological. In some cases, the pro-marriage position is being taken up to

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California court], immigration reform, English-only laws and attacks on affirmative action have a more immediate impact on our daily lives. Same sex marriage seems like a luxury that only middle class gays and lesbians will be able to afford, enjoy and test. Who else will easily be able to afford a quick \$2000 trip to Hawaii to get hitched and head back state-side, license in hand? Initially, getting married will be something only those with disposable income will be able to buy. The rest of our community will have to save up, borrow, or wait for same-sex marriage to be recognized in the continental US.

So what's in it for us?

As with gays in the military, same-sex marriage is about having a choice to exercise a right that heterosexual Americans take for granted. Our opposition on marriage will be many of the same people on the extreme right that have fought us and successfully beaten us down with Proposition 187, immigration reform and attacks on affirmative action. Yes, it is one more fight to add to the list, but this is about familia. A concept many of us hold dear.

Recently, I was on the *Cristina* show (like *Oprah*, but in Spanish) to talk about the Hawaii case. However, the highlight of the show was the marriage ceremony performed by an ordained Methodist minister for a gay male Latino couple and an interracial lesbian couple (Latina and white). Backstage, there was a lot of excitement on the part of and for both couples. They were getting married and they were getting married on *Cristina* in front of millions of viewers. As we waited for our appearances (it was an 8 hour shoot), I talked to them about the Hawaii case. Before that, none of them had heard about it. We talked about all the implications—legal, societal, and familial. Finally, one of the men exclaimed, “Oh, I don't care about that, I'm just excited that I'm going to marry him.” During the taping of the ceremony, the couples were beaming and looked very happy, despite protestations from some members of the audience. During *Cristina*'s interview segment with the audience, some who spoke said that they were more upset about the fact that an ordained minister, a man of God, was marrying the couples. Others were actually supportive of the fact that they wanted to legitimize their relationships. Later that evening, over toasts to the happy couples, they asked more about the Hawaii case. We all talked about getting married there and we made toast to Hawaii.

Letitia Gomez is the former director of LLEGO, the national Latino Lesbian and Gay Organization.

by Nancy D. Polikoff

At last year's Outwrite conference, I attended a reading by a new acquaintance, the author of a recent book on gender theory. One of the sections she read included a strong criticism of limiting marriage to male-female couples. When she asked for my comments, I questioned her selection of the ability to marry as a goal of our movement. She seemed surprised and asked why. I laid out my analysis of marriage as an oppressive, patriarchal institution; my antipathy to valuing couples over all other forms of relationships; my wish to transform rather than mimic existing definitions of family; my reluctance to create categories of acceptable (read married) sex and unacceptable (read unmarried, non-monogamous) sex within our community; and my vision of a society in which essential economic benefits, such as health care, are provided to all regardless of access to a job that provides such benefits or marriage to a person with such a job.

My friend's response was simple and startling. “I never thought of that.” Not disagreement, but ignorance of a decades-old feminist critique of marriage and of years of debate among lesbians and gay men.

The lawyers spearheading “right to marry” organizing know very well the dispute within our community. For many years the national lesbian and gay rights legal organizations declined to commit resources to lesbian and gay marriage litigation, in part because of vehement opposition, primarily from women. Indeed, at every meeting of lesbian and gay lawyers discussing the issue, a majority of men supported lesbian and gay marriage while a majority of women opposed it.

The dramatic escalation of “right to marry” activities in the past two years does not reflect a new consensus on this goal or a quelling of the political controversy. Rather, the increased prominence of the right to marry as a goal of our movement is attributable entirely to the 1993 Hawaii Supreme Court decision, in *Baehr v. Lewin*, that two men or two women must be allowed to marry each other in that state unless the state can show “compelling” reasons for preventing such marriages. (A trial at which the state of Hawaii will try to present such reasons is scheduled for July 1996.)

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Why can't we find ways to recognize next of kin relationships that don't assume biological or sexual relations, or enduring sexual relationships that don't lead to economic interdependency...?

Lisa Duggan

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The Price of Inclusion in the Marriage Club

by Cathy Cohen

In the wake of the publicity surrounding *Baehr* I suggest we all felt the glimmer of satisfaction that comes when any public person or public body acknowledges us in a positive light.¹ But shifting organizational and individual priorities in reaction to the Hawaii decision, and to anticipated opposition from other states that could refuse to recognize marriages performed in Hawaii, is a mistake. The decision in *Baehr* does not wipe out the arguments for working towards different goals and towards a different vision of lesbian and gay liberation.

I am reminded of the resource shifting that took place in reaction to Bill Clinton's promise to end the exclusion of lesbians and gay men from the military and the opposition that promise drew. "We didn't choose the issue; it was handed to us," many organizations and activists said. Similar reasoning should not be an excuse for embracing "right to marry" organizing without a full discussion of the tradeoffs, including what we stand to lose along the way.

Supporters of the right to marry often assert that winning this right will give us the choice to marry, and that I can continue to express my opposition to marriage by declining to do so. No. Heterosexuals today do not experience marriage as a choice. There was a moment twenty years ago when they did, when rejection of marriage was a political statement worth enduring community censure and family wrath. Young men and women today usually do not even know that moment existed. Marriage for committed heterosexual couples is inevitable, conscious rejection of it is incomprehensible.

"Choice" is undermined not only by family and community pressure but by very real benefits that often attach to marriage. I do not blame any individual couple that longs for these benefits to ameliorate real economic hardship. I am convinced, however, that the answer is not to attach more benefits to marriage but to identify basic human rights, such as health and education, and work towards a society that provides those necessities to all its members. I ask those who find my vision utopian to consider the impact of transferring all the current organizing work from the right to marry to the coalitions working for single payer national health care. Not a gay issue? Tell that to an uninsured gay man with AIDS or a lesbian with breast cancer. Are they entitled to decent health care only if they marry a partner with good insurance?

My employer provides domestic partner benefits, but only for its gay and lesbian employees. Heterosexuals can marry, the reasoning goes, and domestic partner benefits are provided as a matter of equity to those of us denied that "choice." If we win the right to marry, domestic partner benefits, themselves only a small step towards the redefinition of family, will disappear. Gaining the right to marry for gay men and lesbians may mean losing what little is left of a vision of primary family units based on anything other than a sexual dyad,² or of a just world in which essential human rights are guaranteed to all.

Nancy Polikoff teaches law at American University.

1. Ironically, the Hawaii court explicitly ruled that lesbians and gay men have no right to marry. Rather, it ruled that it was sex discrimination to permit men to marry only women and vice-versa. The reasoning of the Hawaii court, therefore, was not an affirmation of our lives.
2. I recommend to everyone the recent book by feminist legal theorist Martha Fineman, *The Neutered Mother, The Sexual Family, and Other Twentieth Century Tragedies*. From the point of view of a heterosexual feminist, Fineman concludes that marriage as a legal institution should be abolished and that society should consider as its basic building block, and therefore attach the greatest value to, the relationship between an inevitable dependent (children and the very elderly) and that dependent's caretaker, whose caretaking work is essential for the continuation of society.

WOMEN EN LARGE: IMAGES OF FAT NUDES

A book and travelling exhibit of 42 photographs by Laurie Toby Ellison and authored by Debbie Notkin.

The exhibit will be showing at the New Words Gallery in Cambridge from February 16th through March 17th.

New Words Gallery, 186 Hampshire Street, Cambridge MA 617.876.5310.

"These extraordinary photographs of beautiful and powerful fat women will change your image of beauty forever. We will no longer let society define beauty."
Laurie Edison.

I have to admit that on the question of gay marriages many of my Midwestern sensibilities come into play, at least initially. In Toledo, Ohio where I was born and raised, the marriage ceremonies of family and friends were one of the main weekend activities keeping our lives busy and full. I mean, what can be more beautiful than a half-packed church on a Saturday afternoon, decorated with pink and purple flowers? And just when you thought the scene could not get more picturesque suddenly appears a nervous, but determined bride standing along side her dutiful father. It is at the moment when she begins her walk down the aisle that a romantic narrative sweeps over the crowd, as we are all seduced into believing that this couple is destined to be together, in love, for the rest of their lives. How could anyone not feel proud at witnessing, and hope to participate in, this age old ritual of public acknowledgement and support? However, as we begin to carefully assess the meaning of the campaign for the state sanctioning of gay marriages, we must not only acknowledge the benefits to be gained by membership, but we must also ask ourselves, what is the price of inclusion in this exclusive club?

If marriage, or specifically the state sanctioning of marriage, was purely a ritual of acknowledgement and support then who could begrudge anyone the opportunity to make such a statement in the presence of family and friends? In fact, I believe that gays and lesbians should more actively construct ceremonies, rituals, and events which provide us with a chance to publicly embrace the hope and expectation that maybe we too have found that one great love. Unfortunately, the state sanctioning of our relationships is not a chance to engage in public commitment, nor a liberatory step for the advancement of our communities. Instead this campaign is another ill-fated strategy (like the gays in the military campaign) to legitimize our sexual choices and behavior to a non-receptive and largely hostile heterosexual audience (read the opinion polls—many in the "general" public detest lesbians and gays, consistently ranking us among the most hated groups).

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Class Struggle is Here. It's Queer. Get Used to It.

by Scott Tucker

speaking out

Class struggle has not suddenly broken out among queers. It's been with us all along. Certainly long before gay Republicans organized Log Cabin Clubs across the country, long before Andrew Sullivan became editor of the once liberal *New Republic*, and long before Bruce Bawer red-baited Urvashi Vaid in the *New York Times Book Review*. But these are excellent examples of current political and cultural conflict, and deserve greater attention.

Virtual Equality by Vaid and *Virtually Normal* by Sullivan were written and marketed as "crossover" books, and are being widely read and reviewed. The public stage was set for a dramatic contrast of characters and convictions, given the public prominence and the divergent careers of the authors, the similarity of their titles, and their common themes: sexuality, culture, and politics.

Vaid's own personal and political history has been much more radical, diverse, and activist than Sullivan's. Neither of their books contains any thorough analysis of class conflicts. But these are matters of degree: Vaid treats class more directly and seriously than Sullivan, whose pages fairly reek of class even when the subject is hidden, like a corpse in the basement. For this much daring—and for being a feminist who challenges conservatives of all sexual persuasions, including Sullivan and Bawer—Vaid has paid a price. Sullivan and Vaid are sometimes reviewed together, but Vaid has received fewer reviews in the more prestigious "mainstream" publications—and nastier ones.

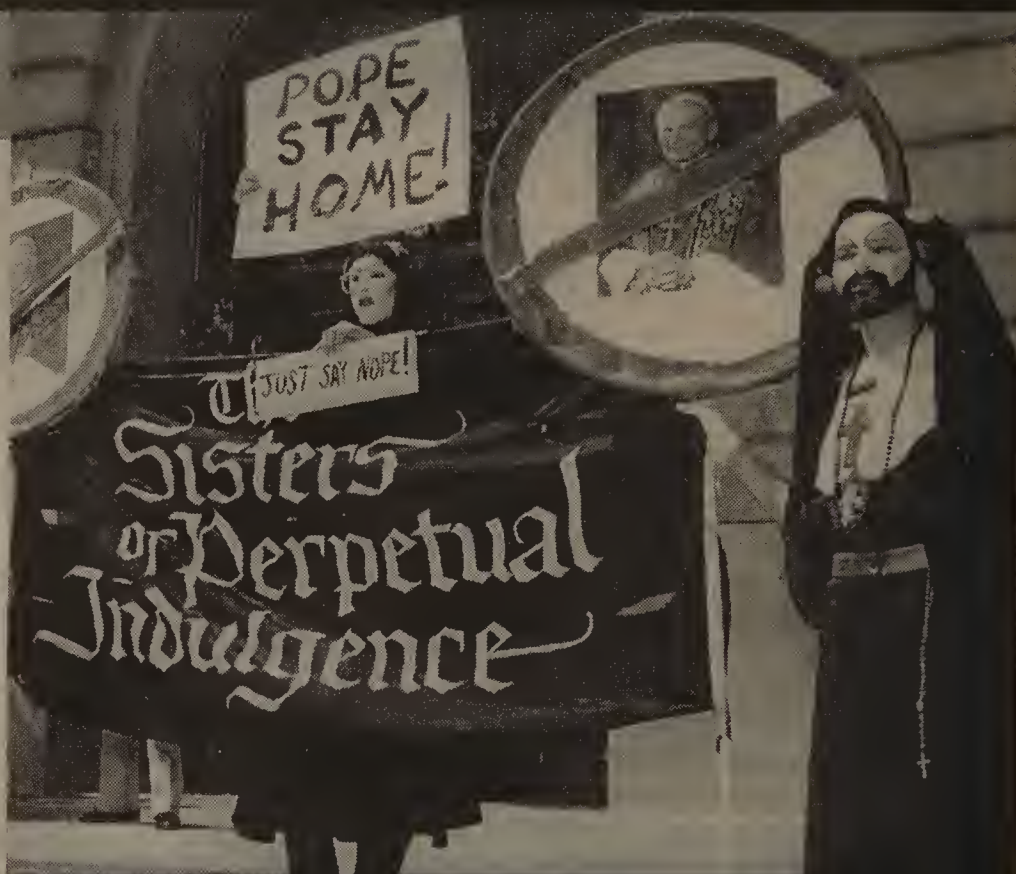
Who Gets Reviewed?

Vaid has received much fairer attention in the gay press, including GCN. In the January 23 issue of *The Advocate*, John Weir wrote, "Dismissal of lesbian writing is misogyny rendered acceptable to women-loathing liberals. How else to explain Vaid's reception as compared to Sullivan's, when their books cover virtually the same ground?" Sexism was surely involved in the chillier reception Vaid received from many reviewers, but in fact there are other—and in this case much stronger—explanations. If Vaid happened to be the lesbian conservative clone of Dinesh D'Souza, you can bet she'd get the friendlier publicity he gets, too. Unlike D'Souza, whose last book is named *The End of Racism*, Vaid believes racism must still be fought.

Sexism alone also does not explain why no review of Vaid's book has yet appeared in *The Nation*—a magazine of leftish/liberal leanings, whose editor is now a woman. I would argue that the politics of *The Nation* continue to be mechanical, and its editors remain densely suspicious of any idea or social movement which can be dismissed as "identity politics." If they would bother to read Vaid's book, they'd find that she, too, argues for greater solidarity.

Turning our sights further right, the *New York Times Book Review* does not simply reflect the current cultural backlash: its editors also play a significant part in the promotion of conservative writers and policies. That's why books by Sullivan and Bawer received respectable reviews in due course—and that's a word chosen with care, because even gay conservatives are subject to the most ignorant inspection by the most patronizing reviewers. Though some straight reviewers are troubled by the idea of gay marriage (which Sullivan endorses), they are generally tolerant. Imitation, as gay conservatives make the case, is the sincerest form of flattery. Therefore such reviewers (including Denis Donoghue in the *New York Times Book Review*, 8-20-95) have anointed Sullivan as a prophet of reason in the gay wilderness; and have appointed him (on our behalf) as an acceptable ambassador. The cultural establishment can hardly ignore the editor of the *New Republic*. That would not be diplomatic.

They find it much easier to ignore or diminish Vaid, who was once executive director of the *National Lesbian and Gay Task Force*, and who remains a prominent progressive citizen. Nevertheless, there was a golden moment when major publishers were giving big advances to gay writers; and Vaid received one from Doubleday/Anchor for her book. That kind of investment demands a fair return; and the publisher leaned on the *New York Times Book Review* when her book went unreviewed. The editors made a concession, but on their own terms. They



Sullivan's genuflections before authority can be grotesque, as when he tries to salvage some word of mercy from the Vatican's unrelenting condemnations of homosexuality.

assigned Bruce Bawer, who attacked Vaid for being a class-struggle revolutionary. She is nothing of the kind, as any fair reading of her own book makes plain; but Bawer himself is certainly a fiercely class-conscious conservative.

Make no mistake: when Bruce Bawer reviews Urvashi Vaid in the *New York Times*, that is a lesson in power. That, too, is class struggle. This sends a powerful message to publishers and writers alike. If Urvashi Vaid receives this kind of punishment for writing about sex, race, and class in fairly liberal terms, then writers who are more radical—who may even be socialists—can expect to receive much rougher treatment, or to be frozen out of this particular market entirely.

No wonder conservative editors and reviewers find the opinions of Andrew Sullivan easier to digest. Sullivan's genuflections before authority can be grotesque, as when he tries to salvage some word of mercy from the Vatican's unrelenting condemnations of homosexuality. He finds just the thing: the Church has granted us the status of "persons." He considers this a great advance in Catholic theology, but infidels will not be so grateful. When Sullivan turns to more modern concerns, he argues for "a politics that can reconcile the best arguments of liberals and conservatives, and find a way to marry the two." That also describes his political policy as editor of the *New Republic*, the kind of politics which prompted Sullivan to write an op-ed piece for the *New York Times* (7-23-95) titled "Let Affirmative Action Die."

Who's Free in the Free Market?

Quite consistently, he argues that "in some areas, in particular homosexuality, it is even conceivable that for the sake of liberalism itself, the case for abandoning the traditional civil rights strategy is actually imperative." Indeed, Sullivan argues that antidiscrimination laws in both housing and employment went too far in the past, and should go no further. Such laws infringe not only upon economic "freedom of contract," but also upon freedom of association, and upon moral and religious freedom of conscience.

The "marriage" Sullivan performs between liberals and conservatives is founded upon this very principle: any landlord or employer should be free to make contracts exclusively with Christians, or white people, or non-union labor, or lawfully married heterosexuals. Republicans and Democrats alike are increasingly putting this principle into legislative practice,

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as they dismantle not only the civil rights gains of the 1960s, but also the New Deal of the 1930s.

Nowadays many liberals call themselves “centrists” and do their best to masquerade as conservatives; and this act often becomes fact. Whether one chooses to call capitalism liberal or conservative is, finally, a matter of taste. It’s convenient for all politicians to claim they are conserving “traditional values” while liberating the “free market.” Some might call Sullivan conservative, but he spoke for himself in the July 1994 issue of *Out* magazine:

“I choose liberalism’s approach, which says we don’t want to raise deep issues about identity, because once you do that, politics gets nasty. If it’s about identity, you wind up, at the extreme, with apartheid or Nazi Germany. Liberalism talks about raceless, sexless citizens, and tries to insure some form of equality among them... Part of the problem of the left is that they deal so much in abstractions that they can’t live in the world.”

So let’s be very specific. In Sullivan’s world, his own identity—upper middle-class, white, male, Christian, gay, and “liberal”—is sufficiently secure. So secure, in fact, that he is on the side of the angels, those sexless and raceless beings. In his ideal republic, whites and blacks are equally color blind, and men, women, straights, and gays are equally neutered. He does not mention class at all, because he can imagine a sexless, raceless utopia, but nothing remotely like a classless society.

If we turn from Sullivan’s scholastic exercises back to Urvashi Vaid’s book, we find that her arguments are much messier, much worldlier, and much livelier. Every page is packed with names, dates, events, and often with examples of her own political work. Fair enough, since she has earned prominence among activists. She settles scores with some of her critics and rivals, sometimes unfairly. In general she is generous, and the spectrum of her experience is impressive. On issues such as outing and the sexuality of youth, she does no better than the usual pieties and evasions. Likewise, her criticisms of ACT UP and of the queer left often miss the major strengths and weaknesses of both, precisely because her class analysis is so weak. But she does illuminate many contradictions of “virtual equality,” the state in which we find ourselves “at once marginalized and mainstream, at once assimilated and irreconcilably queer.”

Vaid mentions class in the usual platform of coalition, but this is plainly an afterthought. This is most evident in Chapter Nine: *Divided We Stand*, subtitled, “The Racial and Gender Status Quo.” The words she chose as this chapter’s epigraph were written by Antonio Gramsci, unidentified as a founder of the Italian Communist Party: “The old is dying, and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum there arises a great diversity of morbid symptoms.” If Vaid is going to quote dead Reds with respect, she might also acknowledge living ones. Erasing socialists from the past, and silencing socialists at present, is also one of the “morbid symptoms” of official political discourse in the United States. Vaid is only selectively sensitive to that kind of censorship. “In line with the country’s current political climate,” Vaid wrote in her book, “the voices of gay conservatives are privileged over others,” and she mentioned Bawer as “a conservative man who really does not understand or credit the gay movement with very much.” (Perhaps this prompted the *NYT* to assign Bawer to review Vaid.)

Conservative Respectability

Bawer turns out to be a fine case in point. In his book, *A Place at the Table*, Bawer describes attending lesbian and gay pride marches with his conservative friends. From the sidelines he laments the damage done to our public image by leatherfolk, flamboyant gender benders, and militants. This has become a familiar scene: gay conservatives get just close enough to this very mixed queer humanity so they may keep their distance with more dramatic effect. Then they congratulate themselves for this much public courage.

The pretense of rising above the crowd is compatible with their own kind of class and cultural conformism. Bawer’s book is pointedly subtitled, “The Gay Individual in American Society,” but anyone who wants a place at Bawer’s table had better have a strong stomach for overcooked banalities served up as haute cuisine. He can’t be blamed for exposing abiding prejudice less freshly and forcefully than earlier generations of gay radicals and conservatives. Their courage created the public space for his own belated coming out; but Johnny-Come-Lately dreams of leading a parade of his very own kind, or else he will follow after at a hygienic distance. Gentility is Bawer’s faith and practice, easy enough since he depends on others to take greater risks and do dirtier work.

Bawer has written cultural criticism for the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New Criterion*, and the *American Spectator*. All are conservative publications, and often repulsively heterosexist. Bawer, however, did not take offense—indeed, did not throw his own closet door all the way open—until a mild gay reference in

[T]he New York Times Book Review does not simply reflect the current cultural backlash: its editors play a significant part in the promotion of conservative writers and policies.

one of his own pieces was censored at the *Spectator*. His work is now welcomed at the *New York Times* and the *New Republic*.

Vaid has pointed out the great space and privilege granted to gay conservatives in the mass media. Indeed, conservatives who are not straight, white, and male are now in great demand. The Republican Party, the Log Cabin Club, and the *New Republic* all practice this much affirmative action. In such cases, we should be cautious in charging folks with “false consciousness.” No, in these very cases, they are much likelier to be class-conscious. The point is proven by the punishing review Vaid received from Bruce Bawer.

Gay Issues?

When socialists are forbidden to speak for ourselves in the mass media, then any and all progressives are more easily red-baited. Vaid mentions “lesbians who might be socialists” in passing (page 248), but never identifies herself among them. There is no reason to believe she’s being coy. She simply treats class and economic disparity in the manner of old-fashioned liberals, before that species became nearly extinct. She fairly and squarely debunks the right-wing propaganda about gay affluence, recycled largely from very skewed gay marketing surveys. Nowhere in Vaid’s book will you find the word class and the word struggle side by side. Put the two words together and they do sound socialist. Bawer’s eagle eye discovered both words separately, and that was good enough evidence for him to sound his own red alert in the *New York Times Book Review* (11-5-95), titled, “Radically Different: Do gay people have a responsibility to be revolutionaries?”

Some of us do take that responsibility, which Bawer mightily resents. But nowhere in Vaid’s book will you find any calls to revolution at all. No matter. Bawer is threatened by her work and recruits her as a revolutionary so that she will be served up to reactionary snipers as target practice. Bawer insists that “her enemy is middle-class white males who, by insisting on ‘single-issue politics’—that is, on a gay rights movement focused on gay rights—fail to understand that for oppressed gay women, blacks and workers, sex, race and class are also gay issues. Issues, yes—but gay issues?” And Bawer added, “Ms. Vaid longs to return to the days of class struggle and liberation fronts.”

Bawer feels entitled to safe borders around his person, his culture, his country. To a degree, so do we all. But there are finally no strictly safe borders. Nobody gets through life pure, and nobody is one-hundred percent anything. To be purely a member of one sex, race, class, faith, or party is delusional. In any particular situation or relationship, our own identity and our own solidarity with others may change. Bawer has the luxury and misfortune to take his singularly “pure” gay identity for granted.

I don’t mean to condemn gay conservatives to the lowest pit of hell, which Dante reserved for traitors. Whether we like it or not, they are loyal to their own cause. In matters of basic democracy, radicals must extend solidarity even to many people who won’t return the favor; otherwise class struggle is truly nothing but a bloody slogan. But if “integration, education, and conciliation” are serious goals—these words are Bawer’s own—then we can’t get there from here by way of sexless, raceless, and classless transcendentalism. That is a fiction with real force, and it’s not just selfish; it’s not just stupid; it’s suicidal.

Scott Tucker lives in Philadelphia, and is a regular columnist for The Humanist. His pamphlet, *Fighting Words: An Open Letter to Queers and Radicals*, was published by Cassell; and a collection of his essays, *Our Right to the World*, will be published by South End Press.

profitable we're done with just giving. Management refused. They refused to bargain, they refused to submit to arbitration, they refused pleas from the Mayor to bargain in good faith. They worked to split the Council of Newspaper Unions, to confuse and demoralize their employees, to divide worker from worker. They exploited fear, they bombarded us with memos attacking our leaders. After the unions tried to bargain month after month, without a contract, management went ahead and made the changes they always wanted. In effect, they said the old contract was null, the unions were null, our concerns were null, and we could accept their terms or strike. We went on strike July 13 at 8:00 p.m. It has been four months now, that means four months without a pay check.

Gay Journalists Break Strike

I wish I could say that the response of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community has been uniformly positive, I wish I could say that our whole community has supported the workers of the Detroit Newspaper Strike. But I can't. In October, the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists' Association met in Washington, DC for their annual conference. Shortly before that conference, the vice-president of the NLGJA board moved to Detroit to take a job as a replacement reporter for the *Free Press*. In Detroit, we call people who take workers' jobs from them during a strike, "scabs." Jennifer Jaurez-Robles is a Latina lesbian who took the job of another Latina.

The Michigan delegation of the NLGJA brought this to the attention of the organization and the organization chose to do nothing. They did not consider asking for her resignation; they did not consider censure; they didn't even have an open discussion of the issues at stake. They said: This is not an issue that is important to our community. There is an important reason for their silence. Gannet gave \$10,000 and Knight-Ridder gave \$15,000 to put on the NLGJA conference. You don't bite the hand that feeds you.

Jaurez-Robles is not alone. I've seen gay men cross the picket lines; I've seen young gay men move here straight from college and take jobs from my friends who had years of experience. I've listened to gay and lesbian friends argue with me that I'm being foolish, that unions don't care about us, that I can make it on my own. I've listened to people in our community dismiss a battle that I consider a simple question of right and wrong, of ethical action, good and evil. And the arguments they make are based on self interest, money and the cynicism born of having lost too many battles because of the betrayal of people we thought were friends.

Well, this is an important issue to the gay and lesbian community; it's important for many reasons. The obvious reason is that there are people right now fighting for equity and justice, and those things are indivisible. If we support them, they will support us. And unions have supported us. Despite the prejudices and slander spread about unions everyday in the mainstream media, unions have supported the cause of gay and lesbian workers. They have fought for anti-discrimination language, equal treatment, freedom from harassment and spousal benefits. There is a hidden and effaced history of unions that we ignore or forget at our peril. Unions are not free from corruption and they're not free from bigotry. Their record isn't spotless but it stands up very well against the hypocrisies and backsliding on our issues that we see in corporate America today. Unions aren't perfect, but they are democratic; they are as good as we make them. Can we say that about corporate America?

Taking on Gay-Friendly Business

There is another reason this strike is important to our community. The *Free Press* and the *News*, each in their own way, have been great friends to our community. The *Free Press* has a long history of supporting progressive causes, including the rights of gay and lesbian people. *The News* is edited and published by Robert Giles who, in July, won the Michigan Pride Award for excellence in coverage of our issues. It was Giles who gave Deb Price the chance to write the first weekly column about our community in a major daily newspaper. Giles resisted the bigotry of angry readers, and in the workplace he has resisted the bigotry of employees. And yet, for all that, Giles and the people at Gannet and Knight-Ridder, have declared war on their own people, on the unions of Detroit, and on good journalism. They have put not just profits before people, but obscene profits before people. When they did that they declared war on our community as well.

At the *Detroit News* I worked on the fourth floor. I was the classical music critic consigned to the culture ghetto. The business, sports and news sections were all on the second floor—the butch floor. I was nervous around the reporters in those departments, in part because of my preconceptions about what they might think of me, in part because they deal with issues of crime and money, gov-

ernment and corruption. I write about Mozart. And yet, without my saying anything in particular, I've noticed that my colleagues don't make fag jokes; and if a stray comment sneaks out once in a while, it falls flat. Somehow, without work or confrontation, people whom I thought might be homophobic show respect and tolerance.

Creating Alliances

There's a lesson in this. Although the picket line is an angry place where desperate people, casting around for the ugliest word they can find, may scream faggot, it's also a place where gay men and lesbians stand beside straight people. When cops in riot gear are coming at you with tear gas, pepper spray and clubs, when company-hired striker breakers are smashing windshields, setting their own trucks on fire, kicking and beating strikers—when you're facing all of this, the people next to you aren't thinking about your sexuality. They are grateful that you are there.

There is an unprecedented opportunity, in this strike and across the country, for our community to make alliances with labor unions. It's tempting to throw our lot in with our employers, to trust the beneficence of the corporations that feed so many of us. It's tempting to think that we don't need unions, that by out-earning, out-consuming, out-spending straight society, we can beat them at their own game. It's tempting to think that unions will keep us down, but ambition will lead us to independence and freedom. But it doesn't work; that way lies isolation, vulnerability and the despair of hollow materialism. People may envy our success in the corporate world, but envy doesn't breed tolerance, it doesn't win us votes. Yes, we occasionally win a battle in the corporate world; occasionally good people within corporations stand up for our rights. But what corporate America gives, it takes away; it gives to us and then it gives to our enemies. They are our friends so long as it doesn't make them too many enemies or cost them a nickel. Corporations have only one purpose—to return profits to their owners and their executives. In the name of greater profits they will do anything—eliminate thousands of jobs, and crush anyone within them that dares to demur.

What We're Up Against

Unions are the only organizations today that can effectively fight corporate America. They are the only organizations that can secure us rights and dignity within the workplace. Corporations give and they take away, but what unions win they win for good because they know how to fight. We fight with words, with arguments and petitions, but unions fight with muscle, with economic power and courage. Over the past 100 years, it was the labor movement that secured what we take for granted today—a decent work week, vacation time, health care. Unions achieved an astonishing level of prosperity not just for their members, but for all of us. We are in great danger, today, of losing everything they fought for. Health care is being taken away, full-time jobs eliminated in favor of part-time jobs with no benefits, jobs eliminated wholesale from companies that are recording record profits. Unions are the only organization in this country that can stop this, and if we fight with them they will fight for us.

I've only lived in Detroit for nine months but I have come to love this city. This is a union town and that means the people have in their blood an instinctive knowledge of something that so many of us have forgotten—that if you pursue self-interest and nothing else, everyone loses. The people in this town—the union people—bring food to the picket, they give money, they leave the comfort of retired life to walk the picket line in blistering summer heat. They are here with us still in the cold. Decency and courage run deep in this town. So much of America dismisses Detroit as a has-been old union town; I've seen a different Detroit, a Detroit that should be leading this country rather than abandoned by it.

While you are here please don't buy the *Free Press* and please don't buy the *News*. Don't buy *USA Today*, it's a cash cow for Gannet. If you have a Knight-Ridder or Gannet paper in your town, write a letter to their editorial board and say what you think about what the company is doing in Detroit. But most important—if you see a picket lines don't cross it, don't cross picket lines literally or metaphorically. And finally, if you do see a picket line, get out of the car, go up to them, ask them why they are striking and if it sounds just to you, walk with them for whatever time you can spare. The real enemy in this strike is that it is being forgotten on the national level and when people feel forgotten they lose their resolve to fight the good fight. When that happens, we all are lost.

Philip Kennicott, on strike against the Detroit News, is now the classical music critic at the St. Louis Post Dispatch.

Entitlements are structured by defining rules for eligibility—if you meet the criteria for a particular category, you get the benefit. Regardless of how many people fit the category and regardless of how much it costs...

In order to meet those reduced spending levels for each year, the Congress has to completely rewrite the laws for entitlement programs. The entitlement programs include Social Security, Medicare, some veterans programs, farm support programs, and Medicaid. Entitlements are structured by defining rules for eligibility—if you meet the criteria for a particular category, you get the benefit. Regardless of how many people fit the category and regardless of how much it costs, you get the benefit. Like Medicare and Social Security, Medicaid is available to those categories of people defined as eligible. They are poor mothers, pregnant women and their kids, people with disabilities who qualify for SSI. Most people with AIDS, under the Social Security Administration's guidelines, are defined as disabled and if poor enough you qualify. Another category has to do with long-term care and low-income elderly, either as a supplement to Medicare or to pay for a nursing home.

The majority of people on Medicaid are poor women and their children, but the majority of money in Medicaid goes into nursing homes. More than 60 percent of the money pays for the care of low income elderly and the disabled. Because it is an entitlement they write the rules governing it in the budget process. They don't have to authorize and appropriate for it, all they have to do is to write the rules and how much money they pay out follows accordingly. The same people who write tax policy, the Ways and Means Committee, write the rules for Medicaid. That is why this falls within the budget reconciliation bill.

The Threat of Block Grants

The conservative legislation to end entitlements will prevent the program from getting more and more expensive, especially when people get poorer and poorer and sicker and sicker. Instead they want to give block grants to the states with a finite amount of money to be distributed. That limit will dramatically drop the costs.

What would block grants mean? :

1. Not enough money in the system to pay for existing programs.
2. No more federal rules, the states define where the money goes.

Block grants give the states enormous latitude. For example, they could say only white people get benefits. Lest you think that idea would be illegal, they have another rule: people can no longer sue the government by using other federal legislation. You cannot enforce the Civil Rights Act in relation to the Medicaid program. They can define eligibility and benefits at will. They have total authority. For example, you can say you are eligible for the program and all you get are two aspirins. The old rule that said that if one person on Medicaid is eligible for a benefit then everyone on Medicaid is— is gone. You can say the deserving people on Medicaid get the full spectrum of health services. Perhaps that will be women and children, it depends on the politics. But if you see supporting single mothers as propping up "failed family structures" as many conservatives do, then maybe it will be elderly in nursing homes who get the benefits. Will people with disabilities get the full spectrum of benefits? Hell no, they argue we don't have enough money for that—they are the most expensive group of all. There is no way they can possibly allow everybody to get the full spectrum of benefits they are now entitled to, given block grants radically reduce the amount available for programs. Another thing they could do is to set costs and determine the amount that is your share, for example, a doctor's visit—they say you pay \$50. They can do whatever they want.

Republicans have a unified platform, most of them favor no form of social insurance; that is, government has no role in the ongoing support of poor, working class and middle class lives. Where they differ is over a tax cut for the rich. For the freshmen Republicans in the House of Representatives, cutting taxes is their

first priority. Conservative Democrats are sympathetic but have drawn a line in support of Medicaid. Liberals of course want to preserve entitlements in general.

Republican governors are surprisingly acquiescent to the elimination of entitlements. They're split between their long term interest and their short term economic self-interest. Long term, they think they are in better shape if the Republicans take charge of Washington, even though in the short term such changes will cause havoc in their own states. For example, in New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, California, and Texas—all states with Republican governors, burgeoning AIDS epidemics, large Medicaid and welfare populations and budgets—they will be responsible for people with no livelihood. It's one thing to write on a piece of paper that in 60 days those on welfare must find a job, it's another thing to find a job in places where there are hundreds of applicants for each fast food parttime job in the neighborhood. The consequences of this shift to block grants will be the governors' problems, not those back in Washington.

The Movement Against Congressional Cuts

Some of the groups we had expected to be front and center in defense of entitlements were really disappointing. Everybody noted, for example, how long it took the senior advocacy groups to realize the extent of the threat. Even though the American Association of Retired People (AARP) hasn't been in the lead, other senior groups have been much more active. The Children's Defense Fund and other children's advocacy groups also have been effective. The AIDS community has now started to be effective. The AIDS Summit gave Clinton an unequivocal message that preservation of the Medicaid entitlement and an adequate benefits package was a bottom line, and that they were holding him accountable for delivering that back to the community. There are differences among AIDS organizations over priorities, but the AIDS community has rallied behind Medicaid, as well they should, when half of the people with AIDS get their health care from it. We must all take the position that a pro-Medicaid vote is an AIDS vote. It should be a litmus test for our vote in the upcoming election.

I believe that the era of AIDS-specific political and policy fixes is over. On the one hand, we have a responsibility to make clear to Clinton and to our elected officials that Medicaid is what the AIDS community holds to be a bottom line issue. On the other hand, despite the myth, we do not exist as an autonomous, potent political bloc. The reality is that we can only be effective through broad-based, multi-issue organizing that recognizes the underlying economic sameness of the attacks on seniors, anti-poverty programs, housing programs, labor, education, mental health services and the other health care programs, and, of course, AIDS services. Only if we participate in making this broad coalition of resistance will we make a difference. The national AIDS organizations have a responsibility to help their members find, participate in, or create those kinds of coalitions at the local level paralleling those beginning at the national level. This is a different way of working and involves a political evolution on the part of those staffs, clients and boards, but I believe it is the way to go.

Ruth Finkelstein is a health care activist and community organizer. She has worked in AIDS and other health access issues at the federal and state level for 15 years.



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Clarke continued from page 10

Informed by Bambara's friend, colleague, and film co-producer, Louis Massiah, *The New York Times*' obituary recounts a similar narrative of her frequent visits to the Schomburg in Harlem and her inspiration by Gwendolyn Brooks and Langston Hughes (Goodnough, 12/11/95). Toni Cade Bambara, in an interview with Zala Chandler, describes the Harlem of her youth during the thirties, forties, and fifties as "a wealthy community, a community where African genius was very much in evidence . . ." (1990, p. 346).

Toni Cade Bambara was a seer, a strong reader of blackness, and one of our last best race women [at a time when there is so much pressure and pretension to "deconstruct" race and gender without destabilizing racist-sexist structures]. Read Audre Lorde's 1972 poem, "Dear Toni Instead of A Letter of Congratulation Upon Your Book and Your Daughter Whom You Say You Are Raising To Be A Correct Little Sister," for a stunning portrait of Bambara and a rich testament to the passions of both writers:

I see your delicate jawbone
. . . as well as the ease
with which you deal with your pretensions.
I dig your going and becoming
the lessons you teach your daughter
our history
for I am your sister corrected and
already raised up
our daughters will explore the old countries
as curious visitors to our season
using their own myths to keep themselves sharp.
(1982, 56)

Toni Cade Bambara died at the age of 56 on December 9, 1995 in a hospice in Philadelphia after a "valiant two year struggle with cancer." That she worked hard and traveled without hardly a falter was testified to by so many of her close friends and former students. Attended by old and close friends, old and close friends' children, Nobel laureates, scholars, revolutionaries, neighbors, intimates, neighbors' children, and family members, Toni's memorial service was held December 17 at Philadelphia's Painted Bride Art Center, a generous space that Toni loved. In addition to *The Black Woman: An Anthology*, she edited *Tales and Short Stories For Black Folk* (1971). Her short fiction, *Gorilla, My Love* (1972) and *The Seabirds Are Still Alive* (1977), and her novel, *The Salt Eaters* (1980) are key texts in the study of African-American literature. According to the eulogy printed in the memorial service program, she used the events of the Atlanta child murders for a recently completed novel, *Ground Cover*. Since moving to Philadelphia from Atlanta in 1985, Bambara became more and more involved in teaching script writing and the actual making of films, claiming in *Black Women Writers at Work* that, aside from pleasure, instruction, and compulsion, there was nothing left for her to explore in writing. She and Louis Massiah collaborated on a number of documentaries for Public Television, including "The Bombing of Osage Avenue" and the recently completed, "W.E.B. DuBois — A Biography in Four Voices." At the memorial service, Toni Morrison, friend and mentor, committed herself to the task of collecting and publishing all of Toni Cade Bambara's writing. Toni Cade Bambara is survived by her daughter, Karma Bene Bambara; her brother, Walter Cade III; and her mother, Helen Henderson Cade Brehon. She needs a biography.

Terri L. Jewell 1954-1995: "Go in peace, Terri, but come again"

He threw a net over her and waited
for her to look up at him
before shooting
her
in the head.
(*"Uxoricide,"* 1985)

[Singer Phyllis Hyman, actress Rosalind Cash, painter Michael Kendall, New York entrepreneur Dellon Wilson, poet Essex Hemphill, costume designer Judy Dearing all died in 1995.] I was ill-prepared for the shock of Terri L. Jewell's suicide on November 26. Terri, your poetry gives me such satisfaction. It was too soon for you to leave. Obviously not for you. But **continued on next page**

Clarke continued from previous page

mourning is what the living do. I am not consoled. I recall the last five lines of "Uxoricide," the first poem I ever edited. How nearly prophetic those lines seem, Terri.

I just noticed today that in *Succulent Heretic* (1994), Terri Jewell's first and last collection of poetry, she changed and elongated the last three lines of the above stanza to: "... before shooting her/coolly/between her/lovely/still eyes" (44). Revision always meant possibility to Terri. From 1985 to 1990, the *Conditions* Editorial Collective published poems by Terri Jewell in each of its issues, except one. [As a member of the Collective, I corresponded with Terri from time to time about her submissions. I admired her work then and I still do. I met a nephew of hers, a student at Rutgers, and we often communicated through him.] Despite the infrequency of "seeing" or the "talking" to one another, we stayed connected through our efforts to be poets. [Hers was the first and one of the only reviews of my own book of poetry, *Experimental Love*, in the *Lambda Book Report* (Sept./Oct., 1993)]

Her poetry was published widely in journals, including: *Bay Windows*, *African-American Review*, *Black Maria*, *Body Politic*, *Calyx*, *Common Lives/Lesbian Lives*, *Kalliope*, *The Lavender Letter*, *Obsidian II*, *OutWeek*, *Poetry Detroit*, *Sing Heavenly Muse*, *Sisterlode*, *Spare Rib*, *Violent Virgins*, and *Woman of Power*.

Since my first reading of her poetry in 1985, I was drawn by the grace of her language, its lyrical and over-running lines, the horror hugging the contours of her voice—the humor and sarcasm as well. Her poems are marked by an economy that ripples for days. Witness the directness and fluidity of "Agrology":

We met in Arkansas:
You invited me to till your loam
sift for seed with delicate vision
my tongue dipping litmus to gauge your hollows.
(1994, p. 23)

She often conflated the body with earth, and food and fucking with planting and eating. Fucking and eating are raucously celebrated in "How To Suck Them Neckbones":

... you pop them tender neckbones in your mouth
making sure they ain't too hot,
ain't too cool to surrender to
you.
(1994, p. 33)

Terri sang the body black and lesbian without coyness. In "Celebrant," the speaker revels in her rage and exalts the body that "keeps it inside":

My rage comes with
lip spots pink as jazz,
full breasts and heavy thighs
scarred in ripped plum satin.
(1994, p. 49)

She delighted in the deep resources of poetry. Obviously, there is not space enough to present a satisfying elucidation of her work. That necessary task awaits some supple mind. According to Mistinguette Smith Malone in *Sojourner* (January, 1996, p. 15), Terri was involved in several book projects, in addition to the extremely popular, *Black Woman's Gumbo Ya-Ya: Quotations by Black Women* (1993). *Dread Woman/Lock Sister*, an anthology, was due to be released in December, 1995 and *First to Rise*, a calendar of black women's history, is scheduled to be published in 1997. Her memorial service was held on December 9, 1995 in East Lansing, Michigan where she had been living.

In the "Contributors' Notes" of *Conditions*' last issue in 1990, she presents this biographical data:

... [Born 1954 in Louisville, Kentucky. Nappy-headed, fat
dyke who loves to write, take pictures of inanimate
objects close up, and imagine that things are better
than they really are. ... (p. 144)]

Though things may be better for you now, Terri, we are impoverished by your leaving. And as Mistinguette Malone says finally, "Go in peace, Terri, and come again."

Truly, 1995 marks me with the too-soon deaths of those who have blessed my way. And I am not resigned.

Those interested in sustaining the legacies of Toni Cade Bambara and Terri Jewell may send their contributions to: Estate of Toni Cade Bambara, Attn: Ms. Karma Bene Bambara, 45 East City Line Avenue Suite 469, Bala Cynwyd, Pa. 19004; The Terri Jewell Scholarship Fund, Box 1721, Lansing, Mi. 48826.

Cheryl Clarke is a poet and currently is a graduate student and an administrator at Rutgers University. Her latest book of poetry is entitled *Experimental Love*.

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Duggan continued from page 26

produce an image of the respectable, responsible domestic homosexual as opposed to the deviant, promiscuous, irresponsible queer. I find this development to be frightening and dangerous. In New York City recently, such notions have emerged in the debates over the closing of the bathhouses and bars. Gabriel Rotello and Michelangelo Signorile, among others, have argued that unsafe sex occurs primarily in such public places; they contrast such allegedly fatal locations with the safety of domestic romantic sex. There is substantial evidence, however, that much if not most unsafe sex occurs precisely within domestic intimacy. This slippage in the rhetoric of Rotello, Signorile, et. al., the argument that public sex is unsafe sex, is possible because of the set of ideological associations that connect domesticity with safety, responsibility and respectability. The resulting campaign is ideological, a morality crusade really, and not a pragmatic or effective move to save lives.

The marriage juggernaut can play into this process of producing an image of the responsible homosexual who does the right thing, and confines sexuality to marital privacy. In this way, it's an ideological campaign that can contribute to the policing and persecution of people, especially gay men at this moment, whose sexual practices are not primarily domestic.

Another way that the pro-marriage campaign works ideologically, is to accept and mystify the ways that marriage and family structure perpetuate economic inequalities that are transmitted intergenerationally through property relations mediated by legal kinship. Marriage and family arrangements make this transmission of inequality seem natural or to put it another way, economic inequality is naturalized through concepts of marriage and the family. We shouldn't be ignoring this when we examine the legal structures of kinship and their relation to property.

Abolish Marriage

Finally, I think it's important to note that the ways our lives diverge from the legal models of marriage and family are something we share with most heterosexuals at this moment. Most heterosexual relationships fit uneasily into current legal arrangements for economic partnership and responsibility for children. Existing heterosexual relations also pose challenges to the ways in which households are formed and split, and how sexual relationships might be different from household relationships. We ought to be talking with feminists who are thinking about reformulating legal forms of the family.

Personally, I would call for the abolition of marriage. This isn't as outlandish as it might seem—the Governor of Hawaii suggested it in his most recent campaign. Let marriage be a religious, purely symbolic institution. Instead of calling for inclusion in marriage, we ought to be arguing for creative new ways to institute forms of partnership that are flexible, that respond to the very different needs, relationships and households we actually have. We ought to get the state out of the business of legitimating sexual relationships and into the business of responding to our concrete, changing material needs.

Lisa Duggan teaches gay and lesbian studies at New York University. She is the co-author with Nan D. Hunter of *Sex wars : Essays On Sexual Dissent And American Politics* recently published by Routledge.



Reid Pharr continued from page 11

hand, are all well-employed, many servicing the machines built around and upon our rotting corpses. We find once again, then, that America loves our pathos and is willing to pay for it.

Will you remember Essex? Remember then that he was a nigger and a faggot, one who died tragically of AIDS long before he wanted to go. Remember that he did not simply rail against racism and homophobia as it occurred out there in the never never land of straight America, but within the lesbian and gay community itself, including the Black lesbian and gay community. Remember that his death was not understandable, or inevitable, but the direct result of willful neglect and abuse. Please light no candles, write no poems, do not erase the hurt. The memory can not replace the man.

When my brother fell
I picked up his weapons
and never once questioned
whether I could carry
the weight and grief,
the responsibility he shouldered.
I never questioned
whether I could aim
or be precise as he.
He had fallen,
and the passing ceremonies
marking his death
did not stop the war.

* The poetry stanzas are excerpts from the work of Essex Hemphill.

**Robert Reid-Pharr is a writer and cultural activist who teaches in the English
Department at Johns Hopkins University.**

The Problem with Marriage

For those of us facing the Rightwing's stampede into state legislatures, these are not rhetorical questions. New York, like many states, has seen some success in lesbian and gay family advocacy work. The term "family" includes lesbian and gay couples in certain housing contexts. State adoption regulations have long prohibited sexual orientation discrimination. Scores of private employers and a few municipalities provide their workers with domestic partner benefits. New York is one of only two states in the country (along with Vermont) that extends domestic partner benefits to unmarried state workers, and is one of three states who's highest courts have established second parent adoption rights (along with Vermont and Massachusetts).

As in most states, it is simply unreasonable to expect that we are going to forego organizing against the threat to these successes in favor of the still rather theoretical impact of the marriage decision. It is downright absurd to suggest a strategy of promoting an affirmative right to marry (as opposed to defending against the backlash) in a state in which we cannot get basic employment protections and where the legislature kicked off its 1996 session with a bill requiring HIV testing of criminal defendants arrested for crimes such as disorderly conduct (i.e., civil disobedience). As important as marriage is to many lesbian and gay couples in our state, it must be interconnected with the need to preserve all of our family gains.

Additionally, there are serious ramifications to our victories were we to focus exclusively, or even predominantly, on marriage. First, we would foster a conservative message of marriage as the acknowledged, centrally important social and legal relationship, thereby eclipsing the broader scope of our family work until the question of same-sex marriage is resolved. Judges, policy makers and employers would cease exploring alternative principles to marriage while the question of marriage is pending. Already we face the obstacle of many employers, for example, who erroneously believe that state marriage laws excluding same-sex couples restrict their ability to extend partner benefits. Second, by definition, our marriage media promotion would highlight the "good" families so as not to scare straight America. As a community, we already overly emphasize the more "acceptable" families in our self promotion. At least we are currently able to align ourselves with the millions of families who likewise endure outsider status because of the preeminence of marriage and nuclear families. Unless we are very deliberate, the marriage strategy being adopted will likely promote a false image of marital perfection that even married people do not live by.

Third, we must at least acknowledge the impact of marriage on the rights that we have already secured. Hard-won domestic partner benefits policies will be scrapped simply because the motivation for adopting many of them in the first place was to accommodate employees who could not marry their partner. Bereavement leave, health care coverage, family sick leave for unmarried workers will be repealed. The equality principles of treating married and unmarried employees alike will be lost in the stampede backwards to the good old days in which marriage was the accepted precondition to benefits. Second parent adoptions, without marriage, will be

No longer can we avoid discussing a "marriage strategy."

denied. If you wish to give legal stability to your family, marriage will be the only way. We cannot sustain these victories unless they are considered at least equally important to winning the right to marriage. That means, those who want and achieve marriage rights cannot just go home after the reception, but must stay with us to continue the fight against the injustice of providing life sustaining benefits and protections only to married people.

Confronting Our Differences

Certainly distinct, at times fundamental, differences over the social goals of gay and lesbian family recognition will always linger. Those who advocate for same-sex marriage, while not necessarily opposed to fighting for broader definitions of family, see that struggle as merely a step towards the ultimate goal of marriage. To them marriage is the central feature of family from which lesbian and gay couples should not be excluded. Once (if) marriage is achieved, most of these adherents would all but abandon the struggle for equal treatment of couples who choose not to marry. Gay marriage, to them, is synonymous with equal treatment. If you want the benefits, choose marriage.

On the other hand, not all of us who advocate the broader social goal of enhancing definitions of family beyond marriage oppose marriage, though some do. Rather, our goal is to achieve a day in which marriage is but one form in the constellation of families. All families who share love, commitment and care-taking are equally deserving of protection. Those who function as family members, as lesbian and gay couples currently do, should not be stigmatized, ostracized, or denied economic and legal benefits simply because they lack a marriage license. Gay marriage, to us, has the potential to perpetuate sexual apartheid by privileging those gay and straight couples who choose marriage; the rest of us will remain legal outsiders and sexual outlaws.

We need not homogenize our differences in order to band together. All coalitions operate on the premise that groups have at least one common principle. Though some of us may personally prefer a national coalition for family equality, there is a common principle linking most of the lesbian and gay groups that join the National Freedom to Marry Coalition. In our own ways, we recognize that the social role of marriage has historically enforced heterosexuality, heterosexual childrearing, male supremacy, and religious conformity. Both same-sex marriage and the recognition of non-marital family units threaten this monopoly. Both have become scapegoats for perceived problems facing "the American family." As always, we fight the same fight, though we may have different goals. Neither can take precedence if both are to succeed.

Paula Ettelbrick is the legislative counsel for the Empire State Pride Agenda.

Marriage has been unfair to women in the past. Though those problems haven't been completely cured, they've drastically decreased. In thinking about how gay women might view marriage, it's interesting to note that the vast majority of gay couples who have actually obtained marriage license are women. Harlem until the 1950s, and many examples of women passing as men, are just a few examples. About half of marriage lawsuits, and two-thirds of the Hawaii plaintiffs, are women as well. In reflecting on marriage and the patriarchy, we should remember that for gay people this really doesn't apply at all. With a male couple, there would have to be two patriarchs, neither of which, presumably, would be able to exercise patriarchal privilege over the other. And with two women, there would, of course, be no patriarch at all.

Even without the Hawaii case, which is now overwhelmingly likely to make same-sex marriage a reality in the fiftieth state within two years, marriage would still merit a top priority for gay activism. This is true because no other issue offers the promise of both gaining so many basic rights and so effectively educating the public about who we really are. Laws, for example, regarding employment discrimination and hate crimes—though important—have very little ability to change people's hearts and minds. Of course, this is mostly done through gay people ourselves being open about our lives. But if any political issue can aid the process of making true equality for gay Americans a reality, marriage can.

The message that mainstream society most desperately needs to hear about us is that we love. Talking about the right to marriage is simply coming out writ large. If we are open about the nature of our relationships, in time other people tend to treat us as married couples. Incredibly, this is even true to the point that many straight people believe we already have the right to marry.

And that's the point; the right to marry. Not that all gay people would choose it if available, just as not all heterosexuals do now, even when in long-term relationships. We rightly push for gay rights laws not because an enormous number of gay people will directly benefit; only a very small number of such cases are ever brought, and even fewer win. But what they do most effectively is to send this message: Discrimination is wrong.

Marriage may be a harder issue in that it will take longer to make it happen, but the truth is that without it, many of these other things we fight for may not happen anyway. Until mainstream society views our relationships as equal, no amount of legislation and law enforcement will be able to make up the difference. And society will never be able to see our relationships—and therefore ourselves—as equal, until we are prepared to fight for precisely equal rights. If we didn't make marriage a priority, too many straight people would draw the conclusion that we just don't think ourselves worthy. We're too tall to feel that small.

Jeff Nickels is President and Founder of The Forum on the Right to Marriage (FORM).

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Peck interview continued from page 8

course I want my book to be a big hit. I've been incredibly lucky to have such a successful first novel—it was turned down by every publisher in New York until Farrar, Straus & Giroux took it, and then suddenly it was a hit.

Bronski: And, given the odds in publishing, that in and of itself is remarkable.

Peck: We live in a culture that doesn't reward artists for their work. I have no illusions about this. I'm one of the lucky ones. I've been able to make my living as a writer—with no other jobs—for three years. I don't want that to end.

Bronski: Do you think that your popular success was due, in part, to the fact that *Martin and John* was marketed and seen as a "gay novel?"

Peck: This is hard because I have to say that I think that gay audiences are better, more devoted audiences than straight ones. They—we—believe that we have a stake in the writing. Gay readers are more careful readers. They are passionate about gay writing. I go to OutWrite and readers tell me what they loved, what they hated, what I did wrong. I may not agree, but it's great to get that response.

Bronski: This isn't true for straight readers, or writers?

Peck: Because straight readers feel that they have so much to choose from they are less engaged in the act of reading and experiencing a book. I don't ever want to lose the excitement of having that gay readership. Of course you worry about your readership, your sales, and your marketing, but that can't be paramount.

Bronski: Are there other connections you want to talk about between being gay and being a writer? Whether or not you want to be seen as a "gay writer" you are certainly a "writer who is a gay man."

Peck: I first blossomed in my writing when I came out at the age of 20. Before that my writing was stilted and coded, it was closeted and not at all good. I know that coding has worked for other gay novelists, that there is a long tradition of coded gay and lesbian writing but this wasn't working for me at all. Coming out made me write good fiction. I think I have had the good fortune to inherit the activism of others. *Martin and John* was able to be published—with some trouble—because others had done the work to make that context happen. It is impossible to separate the ability to do this from a community, and from activism in all forms, from grassroots to more mainstream political lobbying. When I lived in New York I was active in ACT UP, Queer Nation, and the Pink Panthers: activism was vital.

Imagination and Activism

Bronski: Was there a connection for you between activism and writing?

Peck: Yes, of course. But it was more than a simple, obvious link. The activism was vital for my life as a gay man. But for me, developing as a writer, there was a conflict between political activism and the more complex politics of fiction, and I haven't been able to find a way to convey one through the other. This is a big source of conflict, one is not more "political" than the other—but it is very difficult to wed the concerns of everyday activism with the more complex political vision of the imagination and writing. It's easy to imagine different worlds in fiction but hard to imagine living in them. It is hard for me as a young gay writer to imagine a past that I was not part of—but that I have inherited. It is hard not to take it for granted; I have to remind myself that I am connected to this past, and to the people—writers and activists—that came before me.

Bronski: How do you, as an artist, deal with this disjuncture between "art" and "politics," between being a "writer" and an "activist?"

Peck: In *The Law of Enclosures* I tried to weave in many political concerns—environmental, the Gulf war, ideas about class and economy—to varying success. When you attempt to describe a person in political terms you end up simplifying that person, the same is true of situations. It is easy to imagine different worlds in fiction, but harder to imagine changing them or living in them. Politics and the imagination are, of course, interconnected, but the problem is bringing those two worlds together satisfactorily.

Bronski: Which I think you have done beautifully in *The Law of Enclosures*. But this still brings us back to the role of the artist—as a commercial commodity as well as a political figure—in today's world. Where is your career going now? You've had one novel that was an enormous critical and popular success. And you are extraordinarily lucky to be able to make your living as a writer. But you must realize that all of this is extremely precarious in the publishing world.

What's Next

Peck: I have no idea about where my career is now. I've had one hugely successful novel and enormous critical success, but I cannot place a short story or an article in a magazine or journal. The latest list of Granta young writers awards for fiction were just released and most of them are hack pieces of shit, I'm not

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[hello, baby!]

listed at all. From a career point of view I want to make enough money to write; I have more books to write. On one level I want the biggest most bloated advance possible and write the most sensationalist book I can conceive of and turn it around—look at what it really means—get to what is underneath the form and the narrative.

Bronski: It would be a great feat to remain secure in your artistic integrity and yet break through the commercial binds that have always kept gay writers, as well as serious writers of fiction from making more money. What is your next project?

Peck: My new novel takes the detective genre—really the Hollywood film version of the detective story—and attempts to blow it up, only to reinvent it, make it real again. It is a thriller that involves a thumbless, albino, black man who frames a gay white couple with pedophilic tendencies for the murder of a seventeen year old white girl in a small, racially mixed Kansas town. I view this next book as a continued attack on the idea of narrative—of fiction. The book is obsessively ordered, it has seven sections, and seven chapters, which are in seven parts. There is a novel within a novel, a first person narration out of Faulkner, and everyone goes insane half-way through the book. It is an attack on traditional narrative. I love narrative, but we have to find a new way to do it.

Bronski: The idea of a gay writer writing about a straight couple is shocking to some people. I think that a lot of the criticism from the straight media of Michael Cunningham's *Flesh and Blood* came from a discomfort with his ability to write about women's sexuality and heterosexual sex. The same might be said of a white writer taking on the task of writing about a Black character, especially one who is not likable?

Peck: When I was writing about heterosexuality I was basing it on my experience with heterosexual porn which I saw a lot of as a teenager. The sex scenes in *The Law of Enclosures* are based on porn—I've never had sex with a woman—but porn is an accurate depiction of how sex works. I also gave these chapters to straight readers and listened to and gauged their reactions. I write about sex based on my imagination and my own experience of the world. It is not a difficult endeavor.

We have fallen into the notion that you have to write about who you are or what you know. This is a relatively new way of looking at this, based on identity politics. It used to be that a writer was expected to imagine—really imagine—what it would be like to be someone else, or to be in situations in which they would normally not find themselves. That is what it means to be a writer. To use your imagination. It is what writing is all about.

Michael Bronski is the author of *Culture Clash* and the just published, *Flash Point: Best Gay Male Sexual Writing*. His book, *Taking Liberties: Gay Male Essays on Culture, Politics and Sex* will be out in May, and his book, *Lesbian and Gay Culture* is forthcoming from Chelsea House.

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An Inescapable History

For me the institution of marriage cannot be divorced from its roots in patriarchy, class exploitation, and white supremacy. The use of marriage to regulate not only inheritance patterns and material property, but more specifically the labor and rights of women has a long history in this country. The nuclear family, in particular the free domestic work of married women, was a necessary component for the expansion of capitalism. And in addition to its patriarchal and capitalist legacy, the state sanctioning of marriage has also been used in racist attempts to designate and symbolize which subjects were "fit" to be recognized as full citizens. For example, slave codes across the South made it illegal for African Americans to engage in state sanctioned marriages, since it was believed that these individuals had no sense of, or value for, family. Further, as late as 1967, in an attempt to protect the tainting of white skin privilege, interracial marriages were not allowed in some states. Thus, consistently throughout history the state has often used the privilege of marriage to separate, divide, and regulate groups in this country. And correspondingly, the institution of marriage has allowed unequal and often dangerous power relationships to go unexamined and unchallenged under the cloak of respecting the privacy of the family.

Democratizing Marriage?

Now some will argue that such concerns are of the past, and that marriage has changed over the years. For instance, no longer are women directly regulat-

ed and labeled as property through this institution—except around the issues of domestic violence and marital rape. And of course African Americans and other previously excluded groups can now have their marriages sanctioned by the state. For many, such changes point to the transformative potential of this institution, where people/groups once excluded are eventually let in: now it's our turn. And while I might agree that the ability to engage in a marriage recognized by the state, as a basic civil right, is something that all groups should have equal access to, I question whether as a community we should be engaging in a political campaign to acquire this right. Specifically, I don't see the campaign to marry as something that serves the interests of all in our communities. Marriage continues, today, to be used as a vehicle to demonize and regulate those marginal group members who do not conform to the normative state sanctioned family. Further, the institution is also organized to privilege certain forms of intimate relationships, protecting or masking power inequalities found within married family structures. These are just some of the concerns rooted in the institution of marriage that, I believe, demand the critical attention of gays and lesbians.

As an African American lesbian, whose many identities define me as outside the norm, I realize that the institution of marriage will never protect me from, or legitimize me to, the "general American public." And recognizing that fact, I ask that before we jump on the bandwagon of the gay marriage campaign we seriously contemplate some of the political implications of this struggle. One often ignored consideration is what will be the consequences for those in our communities who cannot or choose not to get married. There is no doubt, at least in my mind, that the ability of gays and lesbians to marry will further split and divide our communities. For some it may mean more leverage within dominant institutions, within state systems, and more importantly within the places where we live and where we work. However, for the majority of us the ability to marry will instill yet another hoop of normality that we are expected to jump through on our way to the grand prize of legitimacy. If heterosexual relationships without state sanctioning serve as any example, then we can expect the stigmatization, the denial of rights, and the escalation of physical abuse to continue against gays and lesbians, especially those of us seen as rejecting the opportunity to prove our normality.

Right Living

The ideal of a normative family structure, christened through a state authorized marriage ceremony, has been a constant symbol used in rightwing attacks not only against lesbians and gays, but also, in particular, against poor women and women of color, especially those receiving some type of state assistance. Many of the current debates around the "underclass" and more generally the destruction of welfare have centered on the non-nuclear family structure of women receiving government assistance. Propped up as targets for rightwing and, increasingly, liberal attacks on the welfare system are teen and single mothers, whose most horrible sin has been their inability or unwillingness to conform to a normative family structure that includes marriage and an independent economic provider in the form of a man. We can only wonder how long it will take for the current attacks on gays and lesbians to become refocused against only those not legitimized through the institution of marriage. And for those in our communities who find their vulnerability intensified because of their race and/or gender and/or class and/or sexual marginality, then the consequences of such non-normative behavior will only be magnified.

Now in raising these concerns, in no way do I want to suggest that the benefits acquired from marriage are insignificant. Far too many of us have been to funerals where lovers and chosen families have been made invisible and denied recognition. Many of us have tried to make medical decisions for those we love and been told that we were not legally defined as next of kin. The economic benefits, the emotional support, the legal protections we will receive through state sanctioned marriage are all real and important. However, these are benefits and rights that we all deserve, not because we are married, but because we are human beings trying to live in a principled and caring way. I want to publicly and legally care for and protect all those people that I choose and that I love, not the one person that the state says I am allowed to love because I am married to her.

Thus the Right to Marry campaign does little to reorganize the distribution of basic rights in this society. Instead our inclusion in this institution further legitimizes a hierarchy in which those that conform to dominant ideas of what constitutes "real families" and significant relationships are rewarded, while the rest of us are denied the basic respect, resources, and support needed to survive in this society. As a community, we must face the fact that there is nothing inherently subversive or transformative in gay marriages, as they are currently conceptualized through this campaign. Can we

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Prisoner Pen Pal Requests

really assume that by merely rearranging the sexes of those involved in the institution of marriage, we are systematically changing the political implications and power relationships of this practice? Left unexamined in our hurried march to the state's alter is the very real potential for abuse, domination and exploitation embedded in any relationship (even gay marriages), especially when that relationship has been sanctioned by the state as a private affair.

If, as a community, we are truly interested in promoting relationships that are positive and rooted in equality, then we first need to engage in political campaigns that demand the provision of basic rights and resources to everyone, independent of their marital status. Once we have secured this level of equality, then defacto, we would have already begun the transformation not only of marriage, but also ideas of intimacy, commitment and family. As political people, we have to decide what type of goals we are fighting for. Are we happy with the current configuration of race, gender, class, and sexual politics in this country, or are we searching for something better? If we do desire something better then our goals cannot be limited to inclusion in institutions as they currently exist, but instead our energy must focus on transforming the state and dominant traditions that are structured around exclusion and regulation. It is the transformative potential embedded in the lives and relationships of gays and lesbians that is our greatest strength in this political battle.

We bring to the table new ways to organize and think about intimate relationships, families, sexuality, desire, and community. The lived experiences of lesbians and gays, where we create new arrangements and structures for caring and loving one another, stands in opposition to narrowly defined ideas about which relationships deserve recognition and authorization by the state. We must draw on these experiences to actively fight against the formula prescribed by the Promise Keepers, the Million Man Marchers, the Newt Gingriches, the Bob Doles, the Phil Gramms, and the Bill Clintons of this political era, who suggest that the only way for people to be counted is when they conform to a model of a nuclear family (be it gay or straight), recognized by the state. So my hope is that lesbians and gays continue to have commitment ceremonies and to celebrate the creation of new forms of family and community, but that we never be fooled into thinking that the state will legitimize or make safe our relationships. Our safety and prospects for progress as lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered individuals reside in our ability to build communities committed to struggle, aimed at transforming this country for all who find themselves on the margins.

Cathy Cohen was an organizer of the Black Nations/Queer Nations? Conference held last March in New York City. She teaches at Yale University.

The Gay and Lesbian Prisoner Project, a program of the Bromfield Street Educational Foundation, works to support gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered prisoners by providing them with information, referrals and support. Many gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people are incarcerated simply for who they are or whom they love. Others face harassment and discrimination while serving time. All have little access to information about and support for their queer identities. The prisoners listed below are seeking pen pals who will write to them. Offer your support, learn about prison life and make a new friend by writing to one of the people listed below. If you want to become involved with the Prisoner Project by volunteering some time, please call (617) 262-6969. Please Note: Some addresses may have changed since we received their letters! Please write: Address Correction Requested—on the envelop.

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P.O. Box 2
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LOST, my freedom. 28 y.o., brown/blue-green, 5'7", 170 lbs., versatile, sks stable, compassionate, friend/relationship. Willing to relocate upon release. Sincere need only reply, will answer all. James Buzalas, #6803951
2500 Westgate
Pendleton, OR, 97801.

32 y.o. B.W.M. 5'10", 168 lbs., brn/brn, HIV+ sks pen pals for love and friendship. I am friendly, outgoing, with a positive attitude towards life. Correspondence can be fun, lets put a kick into it. Gary Wayne Collingsworth, #639485
Wynne Unit
Huntsville TX 77349

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Toni Drake
911 Parr Blvd.
Reno, NV 89512

23 y.o. G.W.M. sks friendship w/G.M., age, race not impt. I enjoy living life to the fullest, open to most everything. Sorry no inmates. Very Lonely in Texas.
John Finley, #625073
Rt. 4, P.O. Box 1200
Rosharon TX 77583.

24 y.o. G.M., 6'1", 185 lbs. brown/brown. Looking for someone to call my own.
David Fox #621396
G-122C Jackson Corr. Inst.
Box 4900
Malone FL 32445.

26 y.o. 5'8", 157 lbs., blond/blue, caring, sensitive, enjoy art and reading. Looking for an older individual to correspond with, for possible relationship. I've got 13 months to go till freedom.
Karl Gustafson, W43397
Box 1218
Shirley MA 01464.

S/W/G/M, 28 y.o. Blonde/blue, 6", 185 lbs., sks submissive young attractive G/M to care and communicate with, who's willing to be honest & passionate thru letters. Photo exchange desired-no Polaroids allowed.

Richard Howard J-10977
Cal. Corr.Inst.
P.O. Box 1902 B 3C107
Tehachapi, CA 93581.

30 year old white male inmate seeks pen-pals, race, age, gender not important.
Dane Allen Killerlain #133228
Oshkosh Corr. Inst.
P.O. Box 3310
Oshkosh, WI, 54903-3310.

27 y.o. W.M. prisoner serving 33 yr. term on armed robbery charge sks. friendship, loving support and guidance. Any and all are welcome to reply. All replies will be answered as indigent status allows me, no postal stamps allowed.
Dale J. Latiolais #125146
Camp-J-Gar-2-R-2
State Prison
Angola, LA 70712.

B.M. 30ish, 6', 165 lbs., brn eyes, slim, healthy, attractive, educated. Enjoy exercise, travel, outdoors. Sks G.W.M. 20-30 y.o., straight-acting but feminine; gd. health, loving, friendly, to be partner, pet.
Melvin Lewis
2500 Lisbon Rd.
Box 200-AY4244
Camp Hill PA 17001-0200

B.D.M., 34 y.o., 5'5", 155 lbs. need companion.
Thomas Love #272-742
P.O. Box 57
Marion, OH 43301-0057.

G.W.M., would like to hear from any Black male. I am honest, trustworthy, play no games. I will answer all responses, please send picture if possible.
Richard Poorman, #97168
Kentucky State Reformatory
3001 W. Hwy#146
LaGrange, KY 40032.

GBM 35, caring, understanding, open-minded and sincere. Any race!
Steven Rhem
D37635,P.V.S.P. B5-243
P.O. Box 8501
Coalinga, CA 93210.

39 y. o. BM inmate, 5'5", 125 lbs., black / brown
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Glen Martin Rondle #288933

Darrington Unit

Route 3, Box 59

Rosharon, TX 77583.

Gay American Indian, 31 y.o., 6'2", 168 lbs. Sks
down-to-earth outdoor lover serious about starting
a relationship. Friends first.

Vernell Selvage #A235561

P.O. Box 4501

Lima OH 45802.

34 y.o. gay white male, brown/blue, 5'9". Loves
giving and receiving love. Hobbies: cooking, camp-
ing out, sunlit/moonlit walks, photography. Sks gay
white male to get to know, have long relationship
and more with.

Herb R. Shucklford, Jr.

Box 900, #504949

Jefferson City, MO 65102.

W.M., 23, blond/blue, 5'11", 170 lbs., bi, looking
for someone to get to know. Must be mature and
disease free.

Charles Vansel #544675

Rt 1, Box 150

Tennessee Colony, TX 75884.

American Indian "Cherokee", 23. 6'1", sky blue
eyes, jet black hair, smooth hairless body. Seeking
friends to exchange letters with. Hobbies: writing,
computer science, kick-boxing, reading. Will write
to everyone who responds,

Jerry Walker #470151

Route 4, Box 1500

Beaumont, TX 77705.

Masculine gay white male. 190 lb. weightlifter
seeks correspondence in dire need of a gay friend. I
can't write other prisoners.

James Walsh 031051 G-416

P.O. Box 248

Century FL, 32535.

36 y.o. M , 5'6", 135 lbs. black/brown, H.I.V. neg.,
sks H.I.V. pos. M to correspond with. I like sports,
reading, movies, outdoors, traveling.

Leary Ann Wright #241003,

Scott Regional Corr. Facility

47500 Five Mile Rd.

Plymouth, MI, 48170.

II. Just Addresses

Vernon Beal, IRN501087

Algoa Corr. Ctr.

PO Box 538

Jefferson City, MO 65102

Maurice J. Blake #111010

EHCC - G-1A

PO Box 174

St. Gabriel, LA 70776

Lori Ann Castro

H04858/3B04-234-U

CA State Prison Corcoran

P.O. Box 3466

Corcoran, CA 93212-3466

Andrew Elias #102552

Arizona State Prison, Florence

Central Unit 2-G-11

Florence, AZ 85232

Bobbie Evans

H64716/3B04-234-L

CA State Prison Corcoran

P.O. Box 3466

Corcoran, CA 93212-3466

Ray Gabbert

R.D. 1, Box 500

c/o MSU

Smyrna, DE 19977

Wayne Garrett 048771

Moberly Corr. Inst.

Moberly, MO 65270

Almanza George #503520

12002 F.M. 350 South

Livingston, TX 77351

Roy Harris #86880

Unit 32 B-Bldg.

Parchmnann, MS 38738

Theodore Hudnall H41844

San Quentin State Prison

San Quentin, CA 94974

Gary Hudson 11594

PO Box 636

West Liberty, KY 41472

Michael Jackson #853508

PO Box 30

Pendleton, IN 46064

Paul D. Jew #611011

Wynne Unit

Huntsville, TX 77349

Robert Justice

H-52088 C7-103

PO Box 29

Repressa CA 95671

Donald Koraska #734454

Washington Correctional Inst.

P.O. Box 510

Vernon, FL 34262

Chris Lee

537642 Wynne

Huntsville, TX 77349

Rev. Kevin McCardwell 935484

PO Box 1111-B12X03W

Carlisle, IN 47838

David Lane McGlothlin

Reg. No. 18159-009

PO Box 5000

Oakdale, LA 71463

Freddie McVay #325712

Louisiana State Prison

Camp "J" Gar 2-L-11

Angola, LA 70712

Joseph W. Malvini, Jr.

J-71544

PO Box 2000

Vacaville, CA 95696-2000

Joseph T. Mealey 27636048

P.O. Box 1000

Leavenworth, KS 66048-1000

Richard Miller 040789 #251

Cake Correctional Institution

19225 U.S. Hwy. 27

Clermont, FL 34711-9027

Emette Mitchell

C-22649 N115

PO Box 2000

Vacaville, CA 95696-2000

Ricky Moulder

PO Box 33293

Amarillo, TX 79120-3293

Debra Newsom

D-15963/3B04-232-U

CA State Prison Corcoran

P.O. Box 3466

Corcoran, CA 93212-3466

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Plymouth, MI 48170

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Concord, NH 03301

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P.O. Box 128]

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